Mr. *WHARTONS* Second Volume

OF

SERMONS.



HENRY WHARTON. A.M.

ONE and TWENTY

SERMONS

Preach'd in

LAMBETH CHAPEL,

BEFORE

The moſt Reverend Father in God Dr. WILLIAM SANCROFT, late Lord Arch-Biſhop of *Canterbury*.

In the Years

MDCLXXXIX. MDCXC.

By the Learned HENRY WHARTON, M.A. Chaplain to His Grace.

Being the

Second and Laſt VOLUME.

The Second Edition Corrected.

LONDON:

Printed for Ri. Chiſwell at the *Roſe* and *Crown* in St. *Pauls Church Yard.* 1700.

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The

The First SERMON. Vol. 2.

ON WHIT-SUNDAY, 1689.

AT LAMBETH CHAPEL.

John XVI. 8.

And when he (the Comforter) is come; he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

THE Mission of the Holy Ghost (which we this day commemorate) was the Final Confirmation, and Completion of the Christian Religion; which perfected the Mystery of the Redemption of Mankind; and at the same time set the last Seal to the truth of it. Our Saviour had indeed long before gathered a Select number of faithful Apostles and Disciples; but can scarce be said to have founded a Church, till he poured out the Holy Ghost upon them.

Vol. 2. Till then their Notions of the intention of Christ's coming into the World were dark and obscure, their apprehensions of the Nature and Constitution of the Kingdom, to be founded by him, false and frivolous; and as they certainly knew not what form of Faith to profess; so they dared not profess it openly. Their religious Meetings were yet in secret; and no Attempts yet made to form a Church, by Conversion of Jews and Gentiles. Their thoughts were not so much fixed upon the remembrance of what their Master had done and suffered, as upon the Expectation of somewhat more to be done by him; that is, upon the hopes of the Comforter, which he promised to them. They wanted yet those Perfections of mind, which might qualifie them for the Execution of their designed Office; that Zeal and Charity which might animate and direct all the Members of the Church; that Knowledge and Understanding, which might fit them for Pastors and Teachers, in the absence of their Master.

All these Advantages were abundantly conferr'd, these Necessities supplied by the sending of the Holy Ghost, as upon this day. Then they received internal light, a full understanding of the Mysteries

ſteries of the Meſſias, a clear Knowledge of all that had been delivered to them; then they obtained Abilities to execute the Office of Preaching, to which they were deſigned; and Courage to undertake it. Then they began, as to poſſeſs an aſſured and rational Belief of Chriſt, ſo to profeſs and declare their Belief in him. So that the Reception of the Holy Ghoſt was to them, what Baptiſm is to us, an entrance into the Church of Chriſt; according to what our Saviour had foretold to them after his Reſurrection: *Ye ſhall be baptized with the Holy Ghoſt not many days hence.*

Theſe were the Advantages conferred upon the Faithful, by the coming of the Holy Ghoſt; but theſe were not all. The chief deſign of his coming was to lay the Foundations of propagating the Belief of Chriſt through the whole World, and to offer the benefits of his Death and Paſſion to all the Members of Mankind; to aſſert the Divinity of Chriſt, to manifeſt the truth of his Doctrine, to vindicate the Honour of God, to convince the World of their Obligation to believe in him, and to confound the oppoſition of his Adverſaries. To this grand Deſign, the aforementioned Gifts beſtowed upon the Apoſtles were ſubſervient,

Vol. 2. venient being such as enabled them to Preach the Word, and confirm the Truth of it to all Nations under Heaven.

The Publication of the Gospel had hitherto been reserved, shut up in dark Speeches and Parabolical Expressions; confined to an Hundred and twenty Disciples, which we read to have been the number of them in the *First* of the *Acts*. But from this day it was to be set in a clear Light, communicated to all, without obscurity or reserve, and propagated to all parts of the habitable World. The Person of our Saviour Christ had hitherto appeared mean and contemptible; no Signs or Tokens of his glorious Kingdom were yet to be found; but now he was to be rescued from that Imputation by visible and undeniable Effects of Divine Power; his Kingdom was to commence in the hearts of Men; and become Glorious both from the Number and Piety of his Followers.

The Jews had without controul dared to reject his Doctrine, vilifie his Person, and put him to an ignominious Death; but now they were to be convinced by unconteſtable Proofs from Heaven, that his Person was more than Humane, his Doctrine Divine, and themselves guilty of the most Enormous wickedness *in crucifying the*

the Lord of Life. The Juſtice of God the Father had ſuffered Aſperſions, in not revenging the Sufferings and rewarding the Labours of his Son: But now this was to be cleared, and the Jews convinced; that neither their Wickedneſs ſhould paſs unpuniſhed, nor his Merits unrewarded. The Devil had triumphed in his ſuppoſed Conqueſt over Chriſt, and his imagination of having baffled the Deſign of the Redemption of Mankind, by procuring the Author of it to be put to death; but his arrogant Pretenſions were henceforth to be checked, his Hopes to be defeated, his Empire to be diſſolved. All theſe Advantages were to flow from the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt; and all theſe our Lord ſums up and Promiſes in the words of my Text: *And when he is come; he will reprove the world of ſin, and of righteouſneſs, and of judgment.* In which words we may enquire, Vol. 2.

I. In what Senſe all theſe Effects and Advantages, are to be aſcribed to the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt.

II. How far theſe promiſed Effects and Advantages of his Miſſion were performed.

As to the Firſt, the word reproving, ἐλέγξει, which is uſed in the Text, in the Original is taken from judicial Proceed-

Vol. 2. ings, and signifieth a Confutation of the adverse Party, by such Proofs and Testimonies, as by an impartial Judge should be allowed to be valid. The Office therefore of the Holy Ghost was to be the Paraclet, the Advocate of our Saviour upon Earth, to plead his Cause, to produce these Proofs, to urge and propose them to the world. There were indeed abundant Proofs before in the Nature of the thing; but Proofs are not convictive, till laid open, declared and proposed.

This was the Office of the Holy Ghost, in this he was to be the Advocate of our Saviour; and this he performed by pouring extraordinary Gifts upon the Apostles, as on this day; which might enable them with Power and Eloquence, with Courage and Success, to propose those Proofs, and *convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.* They were to be the Instruments of this Reproof, this Conviction; not only by their Gifts received, and labours performed as upon this day; but by all their Miracles, Sermons, and Preaching performed in the whole Course of their Ministry. All these Actions were equally directed to the same end, the conviction of the World; yet *all* in vertue of those Abilities

lities which they received upon this day. Vol. 2.

All their Gifts and Labours were ſolely owing to his Power, and derived from his Grant; their Knowledge to *his* Inſpiration, their Courage and Conſtancy to *his* Support, their Speaking to *his* Impulſe, their Miracles to *his* Power, their Succeſs to *his* Bleſſing. So that all which they performed ought truly and properly to be aſcribed to *him*. All the Miracles, Actions, and Propheſies of their Lord before the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt; all the Miracles and Labours of themſelves after it, were to contribute to the Conviction of the World; but all the Efficacy, the Application of this Conviction was to proceed ſolely from the Abilities conferred on them, at the time of *his* Miſſion.

And thus the Holy Ghoſt continueth his Office of Advocate, not only during the Apoſtles time, but in all Ages of the Church; ſince thoſe Gifts which he then began to diſpenſe to the Apoſtles, he ſtill continueth to diffuſe to the Faithful; and by the Efficacy of theſe Gifts it is, that the Church is maintained, the Faithful enlivened, the Conviction continued. He then convinced the World by the Preaching of the Apoſtles; and he now

Vol. 2. convinceth it, by the Preaching of their Succeſſors acted with the ſame Spirit, and by the reading of the Holy Scriptures, written by them through his aſſiſtance and direction. His Gifts indeed conferred on them were far more eminent, becauſe more neceſſary; his Adminiſtration of the Church in their time more remarkable, becauſe manifeſting the Completion of many particular Propheſies of our Saviour. Upon which account the Promiſes of this Text were then more eminently fulfilled. And that they were ſo, I come next in order to conſider.

First then, the Holy Ghoſt by his coming, reproved or convinced the World *of Sin*; *becauſe they believed not on Chriſt*, as it follows in the 9. Verſe. By the World we are here primarily to underſtand the Jews; who notwithſtanding all the mighty Signs and Miracles performed by Chriſt, denied Aſſent to his Doctrine. This disbelief of theirs before the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, our Saviour in many places ſeems to excuſe and pardon; and St. *Pet.* in III. of the *Acts V.* 17. extenuates their crucifying *the Lord of Life* by their Ignorance: Which Plea would have been but trifling, had not their Ignorance in ſome meaſure been excuſable; but after the Miſſion of the Holy Spirit to ſtand

out

out againſt thoſe manifold Convictions that were then offer'd, could be no other than an inexcuſable Perverſeneſs and Incredulity. Of this we may aſſign two ſeveral Reaſons. Vol. 2.

Firſt, that although our Lord had in his own Perſon performed many, and thoſe ſtupendious Miracles; yet theſe affected no other than the Spectators of them. For while alive, he never blazoned abroad his Miracles, nor employed his Diſciples in ſpreading the Report, and teſtifying the Truth of them. So that however many particular Perſons, who were Eye-witneſſes of his Miracles, could not but be abundantly convinced of his Divinity; yet the univerſal Conviction of the whole Nation of the Jews was to be reſerved to the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt: When the Apoſtles were to be endued with Courage, and Power from on high, to proclaim his Actions, and Doctrines to all Men, and if need were, to aſſert the Truth of them, by other no leſs extraordinary Miracles.

Secondly, the chief Note affixed by God, whereby to judge of the Truth of any Prophet, and particularly of the Meſſias, was the Completion of his Propheſies. Thus in *Deut.* XVIII. when *Moſes* aſſureth the Children of *Iſrael*, That *God ſhould*

Vol. 2. *ſhould raiſe them up in the latter days a Prophet like unto himſelf, whom they ſhould* be obliged to *hear in all things*; he gives them this Token, whereby to judge between the *true* and any *falſe* Meſſias: If the Predictions of him, who took upon him the Name and Character of the Meſſias, did really come to paſs; then they ſhould acknowledge him to be the true Meſſias. The moſt eminent, and almoſt only Predictions of our Lord, which could ſerve as Signs of this nature to the Jews of that Age, were the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, the Reſurrection of himſelf after three days Impriſonment in the Grave, and the Final deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, before that Generation ſhould paſs away.

The firſt was happily accompliſhed upon this day; when the Gifts of the Holy Choſt were poured out upon the Apoſtles, in ſo illuſtrious a manner; as the Jews could not but take notice of the exact Completion of his Promiſe, of ſending the Comforter not many days after his Aſcenſion; in *ſuch* a manner as drew the eyes of all the Inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*, both Jews and Strangers upon them, and tended no leſs to demonſtrate the Power, than the Truth of Chriſt. The ſecond Prediction indeed, that of his Reſurrection,

ſurrection, was fulfilled fifty days before, but became not an Argument of Conviction to the Jews till now; as being not till now publickly atteſted by the Apoſtles, who were the Witneſſes of it. The Report of his Reſurrection, had been indeed rumoured in *Jeruſalem*; which put the Sanhedrim upon that ſhameful Device of corrupting the Soldiers, who guarded his Sepulchre; but the certain and publick Knowledge of it was not delivered, till the Apoſtles were enabled and enboldened to proclaim and teſtifie it to the whole World by thoſe Gifts which they received upon this day. Vol. 2.

After the exact Completion of theſe Propheſies and the authentick atteſtation of them, no excuſe remained to the Jews, whereby to extenuate their unbelief; according to the Rules laid down by *Moſes*, they were now obliged to acknowledge Chriſt to have been a true Prophet, and the true Meſſias; and were convinced of their hainous Sin before committed by them, in the Rejection of his Doctrine, and Crucifixion of his Perſon; the horror of which Sin might induce them the more readily to believe in Chriſt, and lay hold of his Merits; that ſo they might obtain Remiſſion of it. Otherwiſe they were to expect the moſt

ſevere

Vol. 2. ſevere Execution of Divine Vengeance for their wilful obſtinacy and disbelief; as *Moſes* had aſſured them in the ſame place, *Deut.* XVIII. 19. *And it ſhall come to paſs, that whoſoever will not hearken unto my words, which he ſhall ſpeak in my name, I will require it of him.* This Sentence, and therein the Propheſie of Chriſt, was in a moſt eminent manner, executed and fulfilled, in the Deſtruction, and intire Deſolation of the whole Nation of the Jews, about forty years after the Aſcenſion of our Lord; whereby the Apoſtles and Diſciples of our Lord then alive, acted by the Holy Ghoſt, were farther enabled invincibly to plead his Cauſe, againſt the oppoſition of the unbelieving World, both Jews and Gentiles.

For however the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, and the Conſequences of it, did more eſpecially convince *of Sin* the Jews, who were then alive, and had been guilty either of rejecting the Preaching or contriving the Death of our Lord; yet it contributed no leſs effectually to manifeſt the Ureaſonableneſs of all both Jews and Gentiles, who either in that, or in all Ages to come, ſhould reject the Faith of Chriſt, when propoſed to them. For the Belief of him was to be propoſed to all

all Creatures under Heaven, and confirmed by Arguments drawn from hence; which were ſo rational and convictive, ſo clear and demonſtrative, that they could not be rejected without the moſt extream Perverſeneſs; and if rejected, the Holy Ghoſt ſhould hereby plead the cauſe of Chriſt againſt them, and convince the whole World, and their own Conſciences alſo, if rightly judging, that in rejecting the Goſpel they had ſinned againſt their own Souls; and that nothing remained to them, *but a certain fearful Expectation of the fiery Judgment*, to be moſt juſtly inflicted on them. Vol. 2.

The ſecond point of which the Comforter was to reprove or convince the World, was *of Righteouſneſs*; the reaſon of which is aſſigned in the 10th Verſe; *Becauſe I go to my Father; and ye ſee me no more.* The Juſtice of God had to the eyes of Men been clouded; when he permitted his only begotten Son to be delivered up, and crucified by wicked Men; when he abandoned him to the Rage of his Enemies, and reſcued him not from the Inſults of the Jews by an extraordinary Interpoſition from Heaven. The Majeſty of the Deity ſeemed then to be eclipſed, and ſuffer diminution; when ſubjected to the Contradiction and Affronts

of

Vol 2. of unreasonable Men. Men naturally expect that God should even in this World declare in behalf of oppressed Innocence; either by rescuing it from the Malice of its Enemies, or taking a severe Revenge upon the Oppressors of it. And even Christians, who have a better and more certain Knowledge of the Methods of Providence, cannot but expect, and are allowed so to do; that if no Discrimination be made between the Good and the Bad in this life, yet at least that it shall be in the next; when Innocence shall be crowned with Rewards, which shall be enhanced by Patience in Sufferings; and Violence chastised with Punishments, which shall be so much the sharper, if reserved intire to another World; if no part of them be inflicted in this. This a faithful Christian expects from the Justice of God; and this the Scripture assureth them, *Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest*; 2 Thess. I. 6. *And God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour*; Heb. VI. 10. If then this Justice may be securely hoped for from God by all the Members of Mankind; how much more by the Son of God, whose Person was of infinite Dignity, his Sufferings fraught with

with the higheſt Aggravations of Miſery, and his Perſecutors guilty of the moſt enormous Wickedneſs? That the Juſtice of God might be therefore vindicated herein; that Sin might no longer triumph, and Innocence paſs unregarded; *God exalted* his Son *to his own right hand*, ſeated him in the Heavens, *gave him Dominion over all things, crowned him with glory and worſhip.* Vol. 2.

The knowledge of this was publiſhed to the World by the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt; by whoſe Direction and Aſſiſtance the Apoſtles openly teſtified the Aſcenſion of their Lord; and by which all might be convinced what Place and Power Chriſt now obtained in Heaven, who could ſhowre down ſuch glorious Gifts and Priviledges upon his Followers on Earth. Theſe were ſo many undeniable Teſtimonies that the Malice of his Enemies was defeated, that our Lord was yet alive, ſet above their reach and Inſults; and not only ſo, but inveſted with ſupreme Majeſty and Dominion, able to protect his Church, and puniſh his Enemies; that his former Sufferings had not been then more calamitous, than his preſent State was now glorious; that if God had for a time withdrawn in appearance his Favour and Protection from his Hu-

mane

Vol. 2. mane Nature, he had now in recompence exalted it to an eternal Throne in Heaven.

The laſt thing, of which the Comforter was to reprove or convince the World, was *of Judgment*; and that for this reaſon, Ver. 11. *Becauſe the prince of this world is judged.* It is a Principle even of Natural Religion, that God is the ſupreme Judge of the World, and that of inviſible as well as viſible Beings. The Devil, who is frequently in Scripture called *the prince of this world*, had now for many Ages exerciſed an uncontrouled Tyranny in the World: He had withdrawn the far greateſt part of Mankind from the worſhip of the true God; and cauſed the worſhip of himſelf to become the publick Religion of all Nations, except the Jews. Even the Jews he had often ſeduced to Idolatry, and Diſobedience to the Divine Commands; and had newly inſtigated them to imbrue their hands in the Blood of their Meſſias. All theſe enormous Crimes, this continued Rebellion againſt God, and particularly the laſt and greateſt, the Death of Chriſt, did require from the Judge of all the World a ſevere Puniſhment; which is therefore called *Judgment* in the Text, becauſe a Sentence proceeding from the Rules of Juſtice.

This

This Sentence was to be executed under the Goſpel of Chriſt, as we are told above in the XII. 31. *Now is the judgment of this world; now ſhall the prince of this world be caſt out.* The Execution of it was to be performed by the Preaching of the Goſpel, which ſhould deſtroy the Powers of Hell, free Men from the Captivity of Sin, and withdraw the World from the Worſhip of Devils. This to thoſe proud Spirits was the ſharpeſt Puniſhment, which could poſſibly be inflicted; and this was begun by the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, and carried on and compleated by the Gifts and Graces derived down, and continued to the Church from his bleſſed Influence. Vol. 2.

From the Bleſſings of this day it was, that the Apoſtles received Abilities and Courage to preach the Goſpel to the uttermoſt parts of the Earth, to beat down the ſtrong holds of Sin, to ruin the power of Satan, to turn Men to the Knowledge and Obedience of God. From the Continuation of theſe Bleſſings the Church hath been always defended from the ſecret and open Aſſaults of theſe infernal Spirits; the Governors and Miniſters of the Church have been enabled to preach the Truth, and diſcharge their Office ſucceſsfully;

Vol. 2. ceſsfully; and all the Members of the Church have been eſtabliſhed in the Faith, and ſupported againſt all the Temptations of wicked Spirits. So eminently did God upon this day exerciſe Judgment upon the Prince of this World, that thenceforward his Kingdom continually decreaſed, his Oracles were ſilenced, his Altars abandoned, his Worſhip relinquiſhed, his Diſciples diminiſhed, until a glorious Church was founded in all parts of the Earth; which by a ſolemn Engagement, (her Vow in Baptiſm) profeſſeth Enmity unto him.

Upon all theſe accounts did the Holy Ghoſt, as a moſt faithful Advocate, at his firſt Miſſion, plead the Cauſe of Chriſt againſt his Adverſaries, whether the Devil, or the Jews his Perſecutors: and upon the ſame accounts doth that bleſſed Spirit, who was promiſed to remain with the Church till the end of the World, and execute the Office of Advocate till the Conſummation of all things, ſtill continue to plead the Cauſe of Chriſt againſt all his Enemies; and that he ſhould do ſo, is highly requiſite.

The Devil ſtill aſſaults the Church by open Force, or ſecret Temptations; and to theſe the Holy Spirit oppoſeth his Gifts

Gifts and Graces: Infidels and Hereticks still profeſs Unbelief to the Doctrines of it; and to theſe he oppoſeth the ſame Arguments of Conviction, which were before manifeſted to have proceeded from his Miſſion. *All theſe* remain yet in their full force. Laſtly, even in the boſom of the Church, among the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, are many to be found, againſt whom it is neceſſary that the Holy Spirit ſhould ſtill plead the Cauſe of Chriſt, which they diſcredit by their Sins, and blaſpheme by their Lives, *crucifying afreſh the Lord of life, and putting him to an open ſhame:* In that, no leſs guilty, than all thoſe Enemies of Chriſt, which the Holy Ghoſt at his firſt Miſſion was to convince. Vol. 2.

For did the Jews disbelieve the Doctrine of Chriſt, before the undeniable Confirmation added to it in the Myſteries of this day? Theſe Men by their Actions proclaim their Unbelief even after the Reception of this Confirmation. Did the Spirit of God take ſo much pains to manifeſt the unerring Juſtice of God in the diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments? After all theſe, Men live inſenſible of either; ſlighting his Rewards, and defying his Puniſhments. Did Chriſt come into

Vol. 2. the World, and die a painful Death? Did God exert his Power in so many Miracles? Did the Holy Spirit descend as upon this day, to put an end to the Empire of the Devil? These Men by Perseverance in Sin endeavour to re-establish it in the World, and do effectually restore it in their own Souls.

Justly therefore may this Eternal Advocate implead these Men before the last Tribunal. I have conveyed the Knowledge of the true God even to these Sinners; I have convinced them of the Truth of the Christian Faith; at least they will pretend themselves to have been convinced; I have nourished this Knowledge by causing the Holy Scriptures to be writ for their Edification; I have endeavoured the Improvement of it by the constant Exhortation of those my Officers which I have settled in the Church; I have assisted it by the grant of all necessary Graces, as often as desired: yet notwithstanding all this, they have lived as if they knew not of it, much less as if they were convinced of it. All my Graces and Solicitations of them have produced no other effect, than to render their Sin the more heinous; in that they have wilfully disobeyed

diſobeyed my Commands, ſlighted my Directions, contemned my Exhortations, and ſtifled my Motions. All falſe Perſwaſions, which might betray them to Sin and Diſobedience, I have long ſince corrected. If they imagine the Disbelief, or which is all one, the Neglect of my Doctrines, to be no heinous Crime; I have long ſince convinced the World *of Sin.* If they fancy God not to be an unerring and infallible Judge in the Diſpenſation of Rewards and Puniſhments; I have long ago reproved the World *of Righteouſneſs.* If they pretend the Temptations of the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil to be irreſiſtable, I have long ſince *judged the prince of this world*, taken away his Kingdom, and limited his Power. Theſe then are the moſt criminal Enemies of the Name of Chriſt, who being by me convinced of their Duty to obey his Laws, refuſed to perform them; who ſerving under his Banner, and kindly intreated by him, deſerted his Service, and delivered up themſelves to his and their own Enemy, from whoſe Tyranny I had before freed them. What then ſhall we plead in behalf of our ſelves at that dreadful day? Shall we alledge want of Conviction? That we pretend not to; or Vol. 2.

Vol. 2. if we ſhould, the Holy Ghoſt hath by the Wonders and Benefits of this day effectually confuted that pretence. Shall we ſay that we believed not God to have been in earneſt, when he allured us with Rewards, or threatned us with Puniſhments? That Plea is removed by the Aſſertion of the Righteouſneſs of God made upon this day. Or ſhall we excuſe our ſelves with want of extraordinary Aſſiſtances and Graces of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to perform our Duty, and overcome all Temptations? That Excuſe is overthrown by the conſtant Continuation of the kind Influences of the Holy Ghoſt.

We receive not now indeed thoſe miraculous Gifts, with which the Apoſtles were once endued. Nor is it neceſſary that we ſhould receive them. Thoſe contribute not directly to the ſecuring of our Salvation, which may be equally obtained without them, and loſt with them. All that is neceſſary, all that is convenient for us, is yet continued to us. The Holy Ghoſt ſtill diffuſeth his ineſtimable Benefits to the Souls of Men, excites them by inward Motions, confirms them by his Aſſiſtance, perfects them by his Graces; which leaſt we ſhould doubt that he ſtill plentifully beſtoweth on us for want

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of ſome external Aſſurance, he hath inſti- Vol. 2.
tuted the Holy Sacraments, more particu-
larly the Euchariſt, as viſible Pledges of his Diſtribution of Grace to all faithful Believers; herein beſtowing no leſs a Benefit to the Members of the Church, than he did when he formerly deſcended, as upon this day, attended with mighty Signs and Miracles, with the Gift of Tongues, and Cure of Diſeaſes.

We are aſſured, that altho' any one *ſpeak with the tongues of Men and Angels*; *altho' he be able to remove Mountains*; yet it is poſſible for him to miſcarry, and *become a caſt-way*. But to him that receiveth this Holy Sacrament worthily; to him that bewails his former Sins, and ſeriouſly endeavours to reform them; to him that enters anew into Covenant with God, and lays hold of the Merits of his Crucified Saviour in the Participation of theſe ſacred Myſteries; to him that herein reconciles himſelf to Chriſt his Head, by a lively Faith and Repentance, and to all the Members of the Church by unfeigned Charity; it is not poſſible to miſs his deſired end, *the Salvation of his Soul*; becauſe God, *who cannot lie*, hath promiſed it by his Word and Spirit; the Son hath ſealed it by his Blood; and the Holy Ghoſt confirmed

Vol. 2. it; as at first by his Descent upon this day, so now also by the sensible effects of his Grace, which he diffuseth to all worthy Communicants. *To these three Persons, but one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honour, Power, and Glory, henceforth and for evermore.*

The

The Second SERMON.
ON
TRINITY-SUNDAY,
1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPPEL.

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1 Cor. II. 11.

The things of God knoweth no Man, but the Spirit of God.

THE Doctrine of the Holy and Ever-bleſſed Trinity (in Honour of which this Day hath, for ſome Ages, been Inſtituted and Celebrated in the Church) is that alone, among all the Principles of Chriſtianity, which carrieth an undeniable difficulty along with it,

Vol. 2. it, and hath been always made uſe of by the Enemies of the Croſs, to oppoſe the Revelation of Chriſt.

Other Doctrines, ſuch as the Reſurrection of the Body, Incarnation of the Son of God, and ſuch like, may appear Incredible; but at the ſame time it cannot be denied, that they are poſſible: And when the Motives of Faith are added to them, muſt by all Men, rightly Judging, be allowed to be credible. But it is pretended, that the Exiſtence of a Trinity of Perſons, in the ſame Divine Nature, is even contradictory, and therefore impoſſible; that it overthroweth the Primary Notions of our Underſtanding, and allowed Principles of Reaſon. Even many Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, who acknowledge all the Revelations of Chriſt to be true, and believe him to have acted by a Divine Miſſion, yet *Stumble at this Stone of Offence*; and therefore to avoid it, have taken up unwarrantable Opinions, plainly repugnant to the whole Tenour of the Goſpel, as the *Arrians* of old, and *Socinians* in later Days.

That we therefore may not be ſcandalized with the ſame Difficulties, that we may be able to reſiſt the Deluſions, and

and even overcome the Prejudices of these Men, it will not be amiss to consider, as far as we may with Safety and Modesty, that Doctrine which is the peculiar business of this Day. For altho' it becomes us not too narrowly to pry into the Secrets of Heaven, and rashly determine Matters, the cognizance of which belongeth not to us; yet since it hath pleased God to reveal this Mystery to Mankind, and make it an Article of Faith, it now ceaseth to be a Secret of Heaven, and it is both our Duty and Concern to enquire into the Credibility of it. Vol. 2.

For the Christian Religion debars us not from a scrupulous search into the Truth of her Doctrines, and placeth no Merit in a blind belief of her Propositions. It is accepted indeed by God, as an act of Obedience and Merit (I mean Merit in a large sence) to believe his Promises of a Resurrection and eternal Life after Death; as it was imputed unto *Abraham* for Righteousness, that trusting in the Promises of God, of giving him a better Inheritance in another Land, he forsook his own Country, and his Father's House; although neither we nor he have received the Assurance

Vol. 2. rance of thoſe Promiſes, by the Evidence of Sence: He had not yet ſeen the Land of *Canaan*, and we do not yet enjoy the Poſſeſſion of thoſe Glorious Promiſes. Notwithſtanding all this, God neither requires nor accepts an irrational Belief in Man; but as he at firſt endued him with reaſonable Faculties, ſo He expects he ſhould make uſe of them to his Glory; which is by no other thing ſo much diminiſh'd, as by affixing to him Revelations repugnant to Reaſon, and including Contradictions; and that the Doctrine of the Trinity is not ſuch, I will endeavour to manifeſt, as plainly as the obſcurity of the Subject will permit.

The Foundations of my intended Diſcourſe are laid down by the Apoſtle in the Text, and in the Context of it; which therefore it will be neceſſary to explain; and therein I deſire you to accompany me, by looking upon the place. The Apoſtle had, in the firſt eight Verſes of this Chapter, declared the nature and ſimplicity of his Preaching and Doctrine; that it was not recommended by pompous and affected Ornaments of Rhetorick; that it depended not upon Sillogiſms and nice Speculations, as did

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that of the Gentile Philoſophers, who were eſteemed the only knowing Men of the Age; that the Matters declared by him, were not ſuch as might be found out by the natural Light of Reaſon; or when found out, were ſuch as would be applauded by the World as extraordinary flights of Speculation. [*They were not the Wiſdom of Men, nor the Wiſdom of this World,*] Ver. 5, and 6. [*But the Wiſdom of God*;] Matters not to be found out by the ſole Guidance of Reaſon, but deliver'd by the infallible Revelation of God, who had atteſted the Truth of them, by the wonderful effects of his Power and Spirit, manifeſted in the Miracles and ſucceſsful Preaching of Chriſt and his Apoſtles. Vol. 2.

And leaſt it ſhould ſeem incredible to any, that the Matters of Divine Revelation ſhould be inconceivable to Human Reaſon, acting by its own Power, he ſheweth us in the ninth Verſe: That this was no more than was foretold by the ancient Prophets, whoſe Veracity was allowed by the far greater part of thoſe to whom he writ. For it was written in the Prophet *Iſaiah*, [*Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither have entred into the Heart of Man, the things which*

Vol. 2. *which God hath prepared for them that love him.*] So that it is undeniable, that the Will of God, and the Myſteries of Heaven may be unknown to Men, acting by the ſole Light of Reaſon; but to Men acquainted with the Divine Revelations concerning them may be certainly known: Now this is the caſe of Chriſtianity. For as it followeth in the tenth Verſe, [*God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit,*] that is, by his Son acting by the Spirit and Commiſſion of God, and by his Holy Spirit inſtructing the Apoſtles in the knowledge of them, and confirming them by Signs following. And that ſuch Revelation is infallible, none can deny; for that it proceedeth from one who infallibly knew the Truth of what he taught, even the Spirit of God, [*For the Spirit ſearcheth all things, even the deep things of God.*]

And leaſt any one ſhould except to theſe Revelations, and deny aſſent to them, becauſe they are things which he never thought of before; and which, even when revealed to him, he cannot well conceive; The Apoſtle ſhews us, that we have no reaſon to wonder or ſtumble at this, from the obvious Example of the Soul of Man, in the 11th Verſe:

Verſe: The Nature of which cannot be conceived by any Being inferiour to it, nor the *Secrets*, or the ſecret Thoughts of it found out by any Being equal to it. [*For what Man knoweth the things of a Man, ſave the Spirit of Man which is in him?*] Yet would it be unreaſonable for an inferiour Being (if it could ſpeak and argue) to deny that the Soul of Man is endued with noble Faculties, becauſe it cannot conceive the Nature of them; or for one Man to deny that there are any ſecret Thoughts in the Soul of another, becauſe he cannot attain to the knowledge of them. And if things be ſo, then we muſt allow the Concluſion drawn in the Text, [*Even ſo the things of God knoweth no Man, but the Spirit of God*;] and not unreaſonably doubt of the truth of them, becauſe we cannot conceive the manner and nature of them. Vol. 2.

So then all Objections drawn from the difficulty of the Conception ceaſe; and it remains only to conſider, whether the alledged Revelation be truly Divine. This therefore the Apoſtle aſſerts in the 12th Verſe; declaring his Preaching of it to be founded not upon bare Conjectures and nice Concluſions, as were the Syſtems of Philoſophy then received and

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Vol. 2. applauded in the World; from which he distinguisheth the Christian Faith by these two Characters, that this proceeded from the Revelation of God, that from the Invention of Men, [*Now we have received not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God.*] And that whereas the Gentile Philosophy, *the Wisdom of this World*, contributed nothing to promote the Happiness of Man, and secure to him the Favour of God, The other effected both, the end of it being no other, than [*that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*]

Further, these Matters when once Revealed, and come to our Knowledge, as we propose not to others with Artificial Sophistry and Rhetorick, so we judge not of the truth of them by pure Arguments of Natural Reason and Logical Inferences, [*Which things also we speak not in the Words, which Man's Wisdom teacheth*, Ver. 13.] But as we teach them with that plainness and simplicity which God directeth, and confirm the truth of them with those Miracles which he effecteth; so we judge of the truth of them, no otherwise than by comparing the Nature of the Things revealed, with

with the general Motives of Christian Faith, as it followeth, [*But with the Wisdom which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing Spiritual things with Spiritual.*] Now the necessity of this Method in our Enquiry herein, the Apostle demonstrates in the 14th. Ver. [*But the natural Man.*] He who judgeth these Revelations only according to his Preconceived Notions taken up from natural Reason, and refuseth to believe any thing which he receiveth not from them, who weigheth not the external Motives of Credibility reinforcing these Revelations, [*He receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,*] believeth not these revealed Truths, which surmount the reach of naked reason. For which reason also, [*They are foolishness unto him*] because he considers only the difficulty of them, and regardeth not the external Arguments of Revelation, by which they are recommended. So that while he acteth in this irrational Method [*he cannot know them;*] it is impossible to be convinced of them [*because they are spiritually discerned,*] not to be found out by the sole Light of Reason, but to be received only upon the account of Divine Revelation. Whereas he who understandeth

Vol. 2.

Vol. 2. well the Motives of Christian Faith, and compareth the weight of them with the difficulty of the things Revealed, [*He that is Spiritual*, Ver. 15. *judgeth all things*,] may safely, and without Error, pronounce of this Matter. And in doing so, he is not justly to be over-ruled with the Objections of those, who consider the thing absolutely in it self, and not compared with its Motives of Credibility, [*Yet he himself is judged of no Man.*] Since plain Reason directeth, that if the Motives be found weightier than the Difficulties, he should declare in favour of the thing Revealed, and not be startled at the Difficulties, as *concerning a* subject exceeding the natural Understanding of Man, and to be known no otherwise than by the Revelation of God, who best knew the truth of it; which Revelation we have, as it follows in the last Verse. [*For who hath known the Mind of the Lord, that he may Instruct him? But we have the Mind of Christ.*]

From all that hath been laid down by the Apostle in the Context thus explained, we may form these two Considerations, whereby to determine the Truth of this Matter.

I. That

I. That we ought not to reject any Articles of Revelation, nor be offended at them, meerly becauſe we cannot fully conceive the manner of them.

II. That in judging of the Truth of theſe Matters, we muſt not conſider their internal Probability, ſo much as their external Motives of Credibility.

Firſt then, we ought not to reject any Articles of Faith, nor be ſcandalized at them, becauſe we cannot fully conceive the Nature or manner of them. For this we cannot rationally do, unleſs we were aſſured, that we fully knew all things, and were able to conceive the nature of all Objects. Which that we are not, we may be convinced, if we conſider either the Imperfection of our own Underſtanding, or the excellency of many Objects exceeding the Capacity of it.

1. The Imperfection of our Underſtanding appears, both from the Conſideration of our Nature, and from manifold Experience. The nature of the Soul of Man is finite, and ſo muſt the Faculties of it alſo be. One of theſe is the Underſtanding, which if it were infinite, could be no part of a finite Soul. It hath its bounds and ſphere of Activi-

Vol. 2. ty fixed to it, which if it exceeds, it can not judge without danger of Error and Illusion. If we desire to extend our Knowledge to all Things and Objects the desire is unreasonable; if we pretend to it, the pretence is foolish. The limitation of our Nature hath excluded all such Hopes, which can be obtained no otherwise, than by altering our Nature and raising us from the condition of Finite, to Infinite Beings. It becomes us to receive with grateful Acknowledgments those Perfections which God hath bestowed on us; not to repine, that he gave us not better, much less be angry that they are not infinite; since it is impossible, that any Creature should have an infinite Understanding.

Further, the Imperfection of our Knowledge is manifest from Experience. The greatest part of Mankind are detained in miserable Ignorance, even of plain and sensible Matters. A barbarous *Indian* could never be perswaded of the Truth of many things, which by their frequency are not in the least admir'd by us. The fabrick of a Watch or the mutual Communication of Thoughts by Writing, is no less inconceivable to him, than the Mysteries of the

Tri

Trinity are to us. And yet we ſhould by no means allow his Concluſion, if he ſhould peremptorily deny the Exiſtence of ſuch things, becauſe he cannot conceive them. Vol. 2.

Among us, Men, who have not improved their Reaſon by Thought and Study, are far more unable to conceive thoſe things which are certainly known by more Learned Men, than the latter are to conceive the greateſt Myſteries of the Deity. And even in theſe the ſame Imperfection of Underſtanding may be diſcovered. For however they may flatter themſelves with knowing the Nature of Finite Beings and Cauſes of viſible Effects, which indeed are the proper and ſuitable Objects of Human Underſtanding; yet they muſt acknowledge their Ignorance in many other things of the ſame kind; and what they do pretend to know in Natural Philoſophy, others oft-times no leſs Learned will deny; and if themſelves now fancy that they know the Truth; yet they muſt confeſs, that they once knew it not, or perhaps had different Conceptions of it. And then that very improvement of their Knowledge is an undeniable Argument of the Imperfection of it. So that

Vol. 2. If Men ſhould always deny the truth of what they cannot conceive, even all natural knowledge would be deſtroy'd, and things moſt certain would be denied to exiſt. And then ſurely we cannot but allow a greater diſtance to be between the infinite Knowledge of God, and that of the moſt learned Man, which how far ſoever improved, yet ſtill continueth to be finite, than between the moſt perfect, and moſt imperfect Underſtandings of any two Men living.

Secondly, The Excellency of the Object may be ſuch, that it can never be fully conceived by the underſtanding of any created Being. And ſuch is God; of whoſe Exiſtence altho' we be moſt certain, yet we have no other than an imperfect Idea of his Eſſence. We conceive him indeed to be a moſt perfect Being, but his Perfections we cannot comprehend in one ſingle Idea; we are forced to conſider them apart; and even then obtain the knowledge of them rather by removing all Imperfections from him, then by conceiving the Nature of the Perfections themſelves. And after all, many Attributes of God, which none deny to be his Attributes, and without which the Divine Nature cannot ſubſiſt,

ſiſt, include no leſs Difficulties, than the Doctrine of the Trinity. I will inſtance only in two, his independent Exiſtence, and his Omnipreſence.

For the firſt, nothing can exiſt without a cauſe; and ſince there can be no external cauſe to God, the cauſe of his Exiſtence muſt be ſoft for in himſelf; and that is the infinity of his Nature. Now altho' all Men firmly believe that God never received his Exiſtence from any external Cauſe, nor needed to do it; ſince the infinity of his own Nature was a neceſſary Cauſe of independent Exiſtence: Yet cannot the Soul of Man conceive how any thing ſhould be the cauſe of it ſelf, without being involved in inextricable darkneſs.

Again, no Man can deny God to be Omnipreſent, who grants his Exiſtence; yet can we not conceive the Preſence of God in all places, without conceiving at the ſame time an Extenſion of parts; altho' we be aſſured that God is an immaterial Being, and as ſuch, can have no Extention of parts.

Further not only the infinity of the Subject may exceed our Apprehenſion, but the Spirituality of it, altho' finite, may confound us in this Life, wherein we are ſo much inured to judge by the re-

Vol. 2. port of our Senſes, that few or none can form a diſtinct Conception of an immaterial Being. All allow the Soul of Man to be ſuch; yet the greateſt part of Mankind are not able to form any Conception of an immaterial Being; and even thoſe who can, yet have no other than a very confuſed Idea of it; which conſiſts rather in a Negative Conception of it, to wit, that it is not material, than in any poſitive Notion of its Immateriality. If then things which are on all ſides allowed, continue to be inconceiveable, if we cannot ſolve the Difficulties ariſing from many Attributes in God, which yet we cannot deny to be in him, without denying his Exiſtence at the ſame time; if we be ſo much at a loſs in the Conception of any immaterial Being; we ought not to be aſtoniſhed or ſcandalized, that the Doctrine of the Trinity cannot be fully conceived by us.

So then ſince humane Reaſon cannot by its own Conceptions alone find out and determine all which may relate to the Nature of God; the Second Conſideration propoſed will take place, namely, That in judging the truth of theſe Matters, we muſt not conſider their Internal Probability, ſo much as their external

nal Motives of Credibility. For ſince we cannot perfectly comprehend the Nature of God, many Properties may be in it, which we could never diſcover by the light of Reaſon, nor yet when diſcovered to us, fully conceive them. But what we cannot conceive, we cannot judge of from internal Arguments, which are to be drawn from the Nature and Eſſence of the ſubject; the perfect knowledge of which being denied to us we cannot form any Arguments from thence. It remains therefore that we reſpect only the external Arguments of its truth; and thoſe can be no other than external Revelation. We cannot doubt, that God fully knoweth his own Nature; and that as he is moſt wiſe, he is moſt veracious; that as he cannot be deceived himſelf, ſo he cannot deceive us. If then we be ſufficiently aſſured that God hath revealed this, all ſcruples ought to ceaſe, which is the Apoſtles argument in this Caſe. Vol. 2.

It muſt be indeed acknowledged, that we may be deceived in our belief of a Divine Revelation; and that ſince God cannot affirm any thing which is falſe, it is an invincible Argument againſt any pretended Revelation: this Matter is falſe, therefore it cannot be revealed by God.

Vol. 2. God. We muſt have therefore ſome rule, whereby to direct our Aſſent and Judgment in this Caſe; and that is very obvious. For the underſtanding neceſſarily (at leaſt reaſonably) inclining to that part, which carrieth the greateſt evidence along with it; if the Evidence of the Revelation of any Propoſition be greater than the Evidence of its falſity, we muſt in obedience to the Laws of reaſon embrace and believe it. But if the Evidence of its falſity exceeds the Evidence of its Revelation, we may ſafely reject it. Let us therefore compare the Evidence of both ſides.

Matters of Revelation may concern either finite or infinite Nature. Examples of the firſt ſort in the Chriſtian Religion, are all ſuch Propoſitions, as relate to the natural Body of Chriſt: Of the ſecond, all ſuch as reſpect the Divine Nature. In the firſt Caſe, which exceedeth not the natural Capacity of our Underſtandings, nothing can be true, which may not be fully conceived by us. For altho' many Properties and Qualities of finite Beings, may lie for ever undiſcovered to the natural light of Reaſon, yet when diſcovered to us, they may be eaſily conceived by us, if they carry any truth

truth with them. So that whatſoever infinite Natures is inconceivable to us, can be no part of Divine Revelation. For we cannot imagine any Revelation to be made without an intended Obligation of Aſſent; now ſince God hath required us to judge according to the greater Evidence, he could never require us to believe a Propoſition, the Evidence of whoſe falſity exceeds the Evidence of its Revelation. And ſince we are proper Judges of the Nature of finite Beings, when diſcovered to us; not to be able to conceive any Propoſition relating to them, is an unanſwerable Argument of the falſity of it; ſince if it were true, we ſhould be eaſily able to conceive it, and reconcile it to all other truths, and the received Laws of Reaſon. And upon this account the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation, can never be any part of a revealed Religion. But in matters relating to infinite Beings it is far otherwiſe. In thoſe it is no Objection againſt the truth of them, that we are not able to conceive them; as we before ſhewed. Vol. 2.

The only internal Argument, which can be uſed in this Caſe againſt the truth of any Revelation, muſt be founded upon a Contradiction included in it; to wit, if

Vol. 2. if the Revelation propoſeth any thing which deſtroyeth the Idea of the Object; or which is all one, introduceth a Conception, which cannot conſiſt with it. Such would be to affirm there are two or more God's, or that he is a corporeal Being, and ſuch like. For the very Notion of God being no other than that of an infinite and moſt perfect Being, the Primary cauſe and Author of all other Beings; to ſuppoſe any other Being independent from him, or himſelf to be capable of Diviſion and Limitation, the inſeparable Property of all corporeal Beings, would deſtroy the Notion of him. In this Caſe we ſhould affirm and deny the ſame thing; or which is all one, Contraries of the ſame thing; wherein conſiſts the abſurdity of a Contradiction. So that the only internal rule which is left us to judge of any Revelation concerning the Divine Nature, is, whether or no it includeth a Contradiction either in Terms, or by ſelf-evident conſequence; For no other conſequence can be allowed in this Caſe; ſince the conſequences, upon which a Contradiction is to be founded, muſt be of equal evidence with a Contradiction in Terms, which is always Self-evident.

If

If we apply these Rules to the question of the Trinity, it will be no hard Matter to determine it. For God being confessedly an infinite Being; and the Doctrine of the Trinity a Matter relating to his Nature and Properties; we may from hence perceive, that we are not to require a distinct Knowledge of it, but only whether it be Contradictory. And first, it is manifest, that it includeth no Contradiction in terms. For we do not say, That there is one God, and three Gods; (which would be all one as to say, there is one God, and not one God.) Neither do we say, There is one Person in the Deity, and three Persons; (which would be all one as to say, There is one Person, and not one Person.) Nor do we say that the Father is the Son, at the same time that we say he is not the Son. These are the only imaginable Contradictions in terms; and these are no part of the Doctrine of the Trinity. Vol. 2.

The consequential Contradictions chiefly insisted on by the Adversaries of the Trinity, are these Two. 1. If there be three Persons, and each Person be God, then there are three Gods: which is Contradictory to an allowed Proposition: (there is but one God.) 2. If these three Persons

Vol. 2. Perſons agree in a third, *viz.* in the Nature of God, they muſt agree among themſelves, and ſo there will be but one Perſon, which is contradictory to the Propoſition laid down, *viz.* [There are three Perſons.] The firſt Conſequence is founded upon this Propoſition; There cannot be a plurality of Perſons, without a plurality of Natures. The ſecond upon this, there cannot be a communication of Natures, without an Identity of Perſons. Now, who will ſay, that either of theſe Propoſitions is ſelf-evident, nay, that they carry the leaſt evidence with them; ſince nothing can be evident to us, of which we cannot judge; and we cannot judge of theſe two Propoſitions, unleſs we fully underſtood the very Nature of God? It is generally imagined indeed, that it cannot be ſo in finite Beings, but that is no Argument that it cannot be ſo in infinite Beings: nor are we yet ſure that it cannot be ſo in Finite Beings. For even in the Soul of Man there is no ſmall reſemblance of it, where are ſeveral Faculties which can operate independently from each other; and yet all ſingly poſſeſs all the Properties and Qualities of the Soul conſider'd as ſuch, as its Immateriality, Immortality,

lity, and ſuch like. So in the Deity, there are ſeveral Perſons obtaining diſtinct Operations, but partaking in all the commune Attributes of the Deity; ſuch as Eternity, Omnipotency, and others. Vol. 2.

After all, it muſt be acknowledged by all ſober Men, that the Difficulties upon which the Adverſaries of this Doctrine proceed, are far leſs evident than are the general Motives of Credibility of the Chriſtian Faith; as that Chriſt died and roſe again; performed many Miracles, which were atteſted and confirmed by his Diſciples, who were Eye-witneſſes of them, wrought other Miracles in teſtimony of them, and at laſt laid down their Lives for the ſame Cauſe; having firſt conſigned the memory of them to Writing, which hath been invariably handed down to us in all Ages. Theſe Arguments are plain, obvious, and certain; whereas the formentioned Difficulties are obſcure and inconceivable to many, and to all uncertain.

There are indeed many Erronious Chriſtians, and have formerly been more, who pretend that Chriſt and his Apoſtles revealed no ſuch thing. But theſe Men proceed chiefly upon thoſe Objections, which

Vol. 2. which we have already Refuted; and upon unreaſonable and forced Interpretations of Scripture, which they wreſted to their ſenſe, while they endeavour to ſolve the Difficulties of this Doctrine, by removing it wholly. But while they attempted this, they involved themſelves in far greater Difficulties, and even in flat Contradictions. For God having commanded, that *all ſhould Worſhip the Son, even as they do the Father*, and themſelves never daring to deny that divine Adoration was to be paid to Chriſt; hereby they have been forced to maintain, that divine Adoration is to be given to a Being which is not God; which is a moſt palpable Contradiction, infinitely greater than all the Difficulties of the Trinity, which they ſo much dreaded. For an Act of Divine Adoration conſiſts chiefly in an awful conception of the Infinity of that Nature which is to be adored; and therefore cannot be paid to any Object, but under the Notion of God. So that in adoring Chriſt with Divine Honour, the Mind muſt conſider him as God, while at the ſame time it denieth him to be God, which is a plain Repugnance of Conception, and a manifeſt Contradiction. So that all the Argu-

Arguments of Chriſtianity remain in full force, in favour of the Doctrine of the Trinity, and thoſe Difficulties which may attend it; being, as we have ſhewed, far leſs evident than are thoſe Arguments; it remains, that if we act rationally, we aſſent unto it. Vol. 2.

I am ſenſible, that what I have ſaid in this matter, is more obſcure, than Diſcourſes from this place are wont to be. But that could not be avoided in a ſubject of this Nature. I hope it may be of ſome uſe to you, not only in confirming the ſteadineſs of your Faith in general; in manifeſting the excellency of the Chriſtian Religion, which requireth nothing to be believed repugnant to Reaſon; and in giving you ſome Rules for the conduct of your Underſtanding in matters of Religion; but alſo in arming you againſt the Snares and Deluſions of a Peſtilent Sect, which hath very lately taken advantage from our Diviſions to revive their Objections, and publickly to propoſe them.

May what hath been ſaid, conduce to the confirmation of your Faith to the clearing of your Thoughts, to the removing of your Doubts, if any ſuch

Vol. 2. be, and therein to the Glory of the eternal and ever-bleſſed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, Three Perſons and One God. *To whom be aſcribed all Honour, Might, Majeſty, Dominion and Adoration, henceforth and for evermore.*

The Third SERMON.

Preach'd on the 9th. of *June*, 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Esther, V. 13.

Yet all this availeth me nothing.

AMONG all the Errors and falſe Perſwaſions to which Man in this mortal State is ſubject, none are more dangerous, and at the ſame time more common, than thoſe relating to the happineſs of his Nature. All the rational parts of the Creation propoſe to themſelves, and the irrational part are directed by their Creator to, ſome ſupreme end. The more ignorable part fail not to obtain their end, being directed by

Vol. 2. an infallible hand; while Man, the moſt noble part of the viſible Creation, miſcarrieth in the acquiſition of it. It is a rational Soul, capacious Faculties, and the uncontrouled uſe of a Free-Will, which beſtow on Man a poſſibility of being truly happy: Yet ſuch is the Misfortune of Mankind, that even theſe are the occaſion of his Fall and Miſcarriage. He ſets the Faculties of his Soul on work to invent new Methods of Happineſs; he runs through all the Pleaſures, whether of Senſe or Reaſon, of which his Nature is capable; he fixeth his deſire upon thoſe which moſt of all ſtrike his Imagination, or gratifie his Senſes; he applieth himſelf to obtain them by the uſe of his Free-Will: When he hath diſcovered the Vanity and Unſatisfactorineſs of one End, he invents another; he grows wanton in his Deſires, and the more he indulgeth his roving Thoughts the farther he is removed from the poſſeſſion of his true End.

A miſerable Calamity indeed, that Man alone ſhould miſcarry in his ſupreme End; yet a Calamity which cannot be denied; a Calamity which hath involved the far greater part of Mankind, who know no other End than what is termi-

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nated in this Life, ſeek no other Happi- Vol. 2.
neſs than what ariſeth from the report of their Senſes, and expireth with them. Many have indeed, by the excellency of ther Thoughts, reſcued themſelves from this common Calamity, and all Chriſtians are by the benefit of Revelation delivered from it: They know a better and more laſting Happineſs; they are not unacquainted with the ſupreme End of their Nature; yet by a miſerable corruption of Judgment they are betrayed to neglect this End, to ſtifle their Knowledge, and over-rule the Convictions of their own Minds.

This ariſeth from an unjuſt eſteem of Corporeal and Temporal Happineſs, which recommending it ſelf to the Soul of Man by the Impreſſion of ſenſe, diverteth it from the conſideration of a better and more noble End, taketh root in his Imagination, raiſeth his Paſſions, and by their aſſiſtance continueth its Poſſeſſion. Nothing therefore will conduce more to the retrieving a juſt conception of real Happineſs, to rectifie the Thoughts, and ſecure the End of man, than to obviate the deceitfulneſs, to defeat the deluſions of ſenſual and temporal Happineſs; by manifeſting how unſatisfactory

Vol. 2. it is in its own Nature, how unable to fill the capacious Faculties of our Souls, how vain and trifling, how unworthy our ſtudy and deſire. This will effectually perſwade us to raiſe our Thoughts, and apply our utmoſt diligence to the acquiſition of a more noble End: When we ſhall be convinced of the inſufficiency of that End, which withdraws us from the purſuit of the other, when we ſhall perceive that no real Happineſs will ariſe from thence; that however it may flatter the Senſe, and pleaſe the Imagination, it will fill no one Faculty of the Soul.

To effect this Conviction therefore, the Scripture makes uſe of various Arguments; the uncertainty of Life, the mutability of Fortune, the loſs of an eternal Reward, forfeited by a blind purſuit of worldly Happineſs; the Vanity of it when obtained; the miſerable Conſequences of it when expired; but above all, the Examples of worldly Men, who after they had obtained all which they could deſire in this Life, reſted unſatisfied, or became unhappy; were diveſted of their Felicity, and reduced to Miſery; or amidſt all their Enjoyments, by a conviction of Judgment, which they could

could not reſiſt, declared and confeſſed the emptineſs and vanity of that Felicity, which themſelves had ſo much courted, and others ſo much admir'd. Vol. 2.

An eminent Inſtance of this, is that of *Haman* in my Text, who, amidſt all his Honours and Titles, his Wealth, and the Favours of his Prince, amidſt all the Pleaſures which this Life can receive, convinced by undeniable experience, confeſs'd, that *all this availed him nothing*. That both theſe Conſiderations therefore, both the nature of the Thing, and the evidence of Experience confirming it, may be uſeful to us, I will proceed upon theſe two Heads.

I. The Example of *Haman*, confeſſing, that all the Satisfaction of this Life *availed him nothing*.

II. The Reaſons, why they did not avail him, nor will avail any others, who, with *Haman*, placeth his Happineſs in the fruition of them.

I. The Example of *Haman* is very remarkable and inſtructive, a moſt evident Argument of that Truth for which we now contend; which will appear, if we view the ſeveral Circumſtances of his Life and Greatneſs. He enjoyed all thoſe Advantages which could en-

Vol. 2. hance the Opinion of his own Happineſs. Among theſe, none of the leaſt is, that he roſe to this Grandeur from a mean Eſtate, which ſet a better reliſh upon his Happineſs, and made it the more valuable to him.

To one who had all his Life long enjoy'd the uninterrupted courſe of Proſperity, theſe Honours might appear of leſſer value. A Satiety of Pleaſures might in ſuch have extinguiſhed an eſteem of them. He might not know how to prize them, becauſe he never knew the want of them. To be brought up in a conſtant Plenty of all that Senſe can deſire, will oft-times produce a Greatneſs of Mind, ſurmounting at laſt thoſe petty Objects. For the deſire of Man in this Life is reſtleſs; ſo that what he hath always poſſeſt he will ſcarce think deſireable. 'Tis Novelty which recommendeth Temporal Enjoyments: The want of them firſt raiſed a deſire of them; and their abſence miniſters an eſteem of their Greatneſs.

Haman had, no doubt, while yet in a mean Condition, before he was taken notice of or advanced by his Prince, admir'd the Honour and Riches of other Men, envied their Happineſs, and bounded

ded his Hopes in the Acquiſition of a like Fortune. He had often imagined he ſhould be truly Happy, when, he ſhould have obtained what he ſo much deſired. The opinion of this Happineſs had taken deep root in his Mind, had filled his thoughts and poſſeſt his Soul. And now after his Deſires were accompliſhed, his Hopes fulfilled; when he was raiſed to a greater Dignity, than himſelf before had even dared to hope; when he was far advanced above all thoſe, whoſe Happineſs he had ſo long both envied and admired; when he was newly entred upon the Poſſeſſion of his Hopes, and had not ſo long enjoyed the Pleaſures of them, as to be glutted by them, yet notwithſtanding all theſe Advantages, he declares, *this availed him nothing*. Vol. 2.

Again, if ſuch a Confeſſion ſhould proceed from the mouth of a Philoſopher, it might poſſibly be attributed to ſomewhat elſe than Conviction of Judgment. It might ariſe from Vain-glory & the Deſire of being reputed Superior to all the Satisfactions of ſenſe, and the vanity of this Life. It might be thought to be ſpoken with deſign of raiſing an Opinion of his own extraordinary Wiſdom or Mortification. As it was uſually objected to the Heathen Philoſophers,

Vol. 2. phers, that they ſecretly entertained the love of thoſe Vices, againſt which they ſo furiouſly declaimed, and directed their Diſcourſe rather for applauſe than conviction. Or if ſuch a ſaying ſhould proceed from a firm Perſwaſion in them, it ſtill deſerved not to be admired: becauſe they knew, or pretended to know, a more real and deſirable Happineſs; ſo that to depreſs the Pleaſures of Senſe, and exaggerate thoſe of the Mind, was no more than their Profeſſion did require of them. Or if a Chriſtian ſhould make ſuch a Declaration after a ſerious Meditation of the vanity of this Life, and the Rewards propoſed to him in another, we ſhould much leſs be moved at it. In *him*, that would be but natural: *He profeſſeth himſelf a Citizen of another world, a Pilgrim and Stranger upon the Earth*, whoſe Hopes and Expectations are placed in Heaven. But when a profeſſed Worlding, who knows no Happineſs, but what is to be received in this Life, who never conſidered or conceived a ſpiritual Felicity, who greedily ſeeks after ſecular Advantages, and makes thoſe the only Objects of his deſire: If ſuch an one, in the midſt of his Fruition, declares his unſatisfaction; *this* is an unanſwerable Evi-

dence

dence, which nothing but the force of truth can extort, which cannot be denied. And ſuch was *Haman*, a ſtranger to the Promiſes of God, an Enemy to Religion, a Slave to his Paſſion, a Votary to Luſt and Pleaſure; and yet even he in the Fruition of all which he had hitherto ſo ardently deſired, confeſt, that *it availed him nothing*. Vol. 2.

Further, this Speech of *Haman* was not the effect of any ſudden Motion, but of mature Deliberation. A worldly Man perhaps may be driven by ſome Diſappointment or unwelcome Accident, to blaſpheme his Mammon, and in a haſty Conceſſion to declare the Vanity of all ſublunary Enjoyments; to renounce his part in them, and pretend that he doth not value them: yet would be unwilling to be taken at his word, and ſtript of all. Such Sallies of Paſſion declare not the fixed Judgment of a Man, and not proceeding from Deliberation, carry no Authority with them. But the reſolution of *Haman* in my Text was far otherwiſe. He pronounced this in a ſedate Diſpoſition, after long Conſultation. He ſent for his Friends to acquaint them with it; and when they were met, did not immediately break out into a tranſport

of

Vol. 2. of Paſſion, and bewail his misfortune. He recounted and amplified the Benefits of fortune to him, took a full Proſpect of all his imaginary Happineſs, as it is in the 11. Verſe, *And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things, wherein the King had promoted him; and how he had advanced him above the Princes and Servants of the King.* He gave its due weight to every Circumſtance of his preſent Fortune, inſiſted upon all the Topicks which might amplifie the greatneſs of it, magnified it in a ſet harangue, and yet after all at laſt concluded, that *all this availed him nothing.*

A ſtrange Concluſion for an *Haman* to make; which yet will carry greater weight along with it, if we conſider, that this proceeded not from any Repreſentation made to him by his Friends, whom he had called together, of the vanity of his riches, the mutability of his Fortune, or the mortality of his Nature. Such Suggeſtions might poſſibly have diverted his Vain-glorious humour for a while to a melancholy Conſideration of them, and in that Diſpoſition have forced him to make this Conceſſion. As *Solon* did to *Cræſus*, making a pompous ſhew

ſhew of his Treaſures and Magnificence : and the Prophet reduced King *Hezekiah* to more humble thoughts, after he had in Oſtentation expoſed his riches to the view of the Embaſſadors of *Babylon*, by telling him, that they ſhould be carried away to *Babylon*. In that caſe, to reſtrain the love of worldly Pleaſure, and for a while ſeem weary of it, may eaſily be accountable. But here the Friends of *Haman*, far from performing ſuch an Office, ſought rather to congratulate his Fortunes, to flatter his Paſſions, to foment his Pride and Ambition, by concurring in an Opinion of his extraordinary Happineſs. Himſelf in order recounted his Dignities; and they admired them. He reported the Favours of his Prince; and they extolled them. He boaſted of his Grandeur and Riches; and they proclaim'd him Happy. Yet himſelf, who beſt knew what Happineſs he received from thence, declared himſelf unhappy, and *all this to avail him nothing*.

Laſtly, this was ſpoken by *Haman*, whilſt yet in full Favour with his Prince, and expecting to receive greater Demonſtrations of it. He ſuffered no Apprehenſions of loſing his preſent Enjoyment.

Such

Vol. 2. Such thoughts indeed diſtract a worldly Man, imbitter all his Pleaſures, and ſuffer him not to reſt contented. It would be impoſſible to him to reliſh any delight, while afflicted with Fears and Doubts, while deſpairing to retain his preſent Happineſs. He would grow Pale at the Proſpect of an approaching Storm, and inſtead of receiving any Complacency from his preſent Proſperity, diſtract his thoughts with the fear of future Miſery. In ſuch Circumſtances an Epicure might well Confeſs, that all the outward Advantages of his Life profited him nothing while he ſuffered inward Diſtraction from the Apprehenſion of his Fall, which would render him ſo much more miſerable, by how much it deprived him of a greater Proſperity. *Haman* at this time had no ſuch Fears, he had yet received no repulſe at Court, his Favour daily increaſed, he had that very day received eminent Marks of his Princes affection, and was the day after to receive yet more. All this he was ſenſible of, and all this he acknowledged in the cloſe of his Speech, *Ver.* 12. For he ſaid moreover, *Yea Eſther the Queen did let no man come in with the King unto the banquet that ſhe had prepared, but my ſelf; and to morrow*

am

am I invited unto her alſo with the King. Vol. 2.
Far from fearing the loſs of his preſent Greatneſs, he probably hoped the increaſe of it, and yet concluded, that *all this availed him nothing.*

If then *Haman* under all theſe Circumſtances miſſed of his deſired end, of being made Happy by worldly Enjoyments, we may reaſonably ſuſpect ſome defect to be in the Nature of them, upon the account of which neither *Haman* could, nor any other can, receive any real Happineſs from thence. And this I proceed in the *Second* place to treat of in ſome few Conſiderations.

Firſt then, nothing on this ſide Heaven is able to ſatiate the Soul of Man; and however temporal Benefits may at a diſtance raviſh the Imagination, and create extraordinary Conceptions of their own Excellency; yet when obtained, they are found to be empty and trifling, unable to ſatisfie the Deſires of the Soul, and fill its Capacity. They are like the Fruit of *Sodom*, which by their external Beauty attract the Eye, but when touched, crumble into Aſhes. While they are yet only Objects of *Deſire*, Men frame to themſelves as it were Syſtems of Happineſs, to be enjoyed in them. No ſooner

do

Vol. 2. do they become Objects of Fruition, but the meaneſt of them is diſcovered; and after a full Enjoyment of them, Man is forced to Confeſs, this is *not* that he deſired, that which he propoſed to himſelf. He is never enabled by the Poſſeſſion of them to ſay, I am now completely Happy, I here terminate my Deſires. He is forced to carry his Deſires yet farther, and ſeek true Felicity ſomewhere elſe; which, while conſtant to his Principle, he can place no where elſe, than in a greater Degree of the ſame Happineſs. This therefore he earneſtly purſues, yet never attains that Degree. If he fixeth the meaſure of the Degree, he may indeed arrive at that; but when arrived, finds himſelf, as far as ever removed from true Happineſs. He turmoils and diſtracts himſelf, experienceth the Vanity of former Projects, invents new Methods of Happineſs; until Death puts an end to his Life and Deſigns together.

The greateſt of theſe worldly Enjoyments are generally ſuppoſed to be Riches, and ſenſual Pleaſures. The latter are common even to Beaſts, who are endued with Senſes no leſs ſtrong and lively, than Men. And then ſurely none will ſo far debaſe his Nature, as to level himſelf

himſelf with Beaſts by propoſing to him- Vol. 2.
ſelf a Felicity, of which they are no leſs
capable. It cannot be denied indeed, that
as we conſiſt of Soul and Body, God in-
tended Happineſs to each part; that he
put us into this World, to make our ſelves
Happy, even in this Life; but then, as
Soul and Body together conſtitute but
one Perſon, the Pleaſures of either muſt
be ſuch as conſiſt with the Nature of
both. As the Soul ought not to tyran-
nize over the Body, by impoſing on it
unneceſſary Rigours and Mortifications;
ſo the Excellency of the Soul ought not
to be debaſed for the ſatisfaction of the
Body. A limited uſe of Pleaſures is not
to be denied to the Body; but then that
very Limitation ſuppoſeth a better and
more noble end of Man, for the ſake of
which they are limited. And after all, the
real Happineſs of ſuch limited Pleaſures
conſiſts not ſo much in the report of the
Senſes enjoying them, as in the reflex
thoughts of the Soul forming to its ſelf an
Act of Complacency, for having limited
them according to the Laws of God.
The unlimited uſe of theſe Pleaſures, in-
ſtead of confering a real Benefit, involves
Men in Troubles and Anxieties; in Cares
and Dangers; and when enjoyed, endures

Vol. 2. but for a Moment, no longer than the impreſſion of Senſe continueth; when expired, leaves only a Wearineſs and Nauſeouſneſs behind them. So then ſenſual Pleaſures conduce little to the Supreme end of Man; unleſs we ſhould be ſo fooliſh as to imagine *that* to be the utmoſt Happineſs of Man, which renders him happy but for a few moments.

And then as to Riches, the natural uſe of them is ſubordinated to ſenſual Pleaſures, and the Conveniencies of Life, and therefore can beſtow nothing beyond them. If any imagine, as it cannot be denied that too many do, that the very ſatisfaction of poſſeſſing Riches, without any reſpect to the uſe of them, bears any part in the Happineſs of Man; this is ſo groſs and unmanly a Conception, as nothing can exceed the wickedneſs of it, nothing can equal the Folly of it. This is a greater Depravation of Nature, than all the Villanies of Senſe, or Sins of Violence; and if no Puniſhment attended it hereafter, would rather deſerve our Scorn than Envy. The Acquiſition of Riches is generally indeed, at leaſt indirectly, referred to the Enjoyment of ſenſual Pleaſures to be procured by them; and as ſuch, can carry the Happineſs of them no farther,

farther, than the Nature of them will permit, which we before conſidered. Not to ſay, that it is an invincible Argument of the unſatisfactorineſs of Riches, that thoſe who ſeek after them, ſeldom or never ſet bounds to their Deſires; and although in the acquiring of them, they generally pleaſe themſelves with the thoughts of commanding all ſenſual Pleaſures, when they ſhall have obtain'd them: yet they ſeldom begin in earneſt a Fruition of them; ever propoſing an end to themſelves, and never taking poſſeſſion of them. Vol. 2.

Secondly, by the Fruition of temporal Pleaſures, no proviſion is made for the Happineſs of the Soul, the far nobler part of Man, which ought therefore to be ſatisfied in the firſt place. The want of real Happineſs in the Soul, may for a time be ſtifled by powerful impreſſions of Senſe, but when thoſe Motions ceaſe, the Soul cannot but be conſcious of, and bewail the want of true Happineſs. To obtain *this*, a Happineſs agreeable to her Nature, which is ſpiritual; and to her Duration, which is immortal, muſt be found out. This can never be placed in ſenſual Enjoyments, which expire with the perception of Senſe; and while continuing, affect not the Soul, unleſs with wearineſs

Vol. 2. in attending the violent motions of Senſe.

It is the reflex thoughts of the Soul alone, which render it Happy: When it can reflect upon its own State without Remorſe or Sorrow; when it can view all its paſt Actions, and preſent Condition with a ſweet Complacency; when it conſiders it ſelf united to God by executing his Commands, and by a ſimilitude of Holineſs. None of all theſe Conditions can be found in temporal Enjoyments. For what ſatisfaction is it to a Man, after the Enjoyment is paſſed, to have gratified this or that Senſe? Do we applaud our good Fortune for having once enjoyed a Pleaſure, the Senſe of which is long ſince expired? Or ſhall we receive any Comfort after Death in the remembrance of having poſſeſſed Riches and Pleaſures when alive? And all this, although our uſe of thoſe Pleaſures and Riches were moderate and lawful, whereas if it was immoderate, the ſtings and remorſe of Conſcience will perpetually afflict the Soul, when reflecting on it. And in that State it cannot but reflect continually, when it ſhall not be diverted by rapid Motions of the Body, drowned by Sleep, or ſtupified by Senſe; when the ſole Object of her thoughts will be her paſt Behaviour, and the conſequences of it her preſent Condition.

From

From this Consideration it will manifestly appear, how much more conducing Piety and Vertue are to solid Happiness than temporal Prosperity; even altho' no Rewards or Punishments should attend the Soul in another Life. For altho' Heaven and Earth should conspire together to render any Man externally Happy in this World; let an uninterrupted Possession of Riches and Pleasure, of Health and Vigour, of Honour and Power be bestowed on him: No one Act of Pleasure, none of all these Blessings, will be of advantage to him after the Cessation of the actual Enjoyment of them. Whereas the Satisfaction and Happiness arising from the Exercise of Piety, Justice and Charity will continue to all Ages. The same Complacency, which the Soul received, when it first exerted any one of these Actions, the same it shall receive for ever, as often as Reflection shall be made upon it; nay much greater after Death, when all the Faculties of the Soul will be enlarged, and that which is now a simple Act of Complacency, will then be advanced into an Extasie of Joy. Vol. 2.

Thirdly, Altho' *Haman*, when he spoke these words, had no Apprehension of being actually deprived of his Riches and

Vol. 2. Greatneſs, yet could not he, nor any other in the like condition deny, but that the Deprivation and loſs of all their temporal Advantages is at leaſt poſſible. The knowledge of this poſſibility alone, defeats all the Pleaſure which may ariſe from the Fruition of temporal Happineſs; at leaſt ſuffers it not to become ſuch as may ſatisfie the Soul of Man. For all muſt acknowledge, in the midſt of their Enjoyments, that they want at leaſt this ſatisfaction to compleat their Happineſs, the aſſurance of the continuance of it. The Poſſeſſors of it are continually diſtracted with Fears of loſing it, with Cares of preſerving it; and that very ſolicitude proclaims the imperfection of their Happineſs.

This Conſideration might abundantly convince Mankind, that true Felicity conſiſts not in the Pleaſures of Senſe or ſecular Enjoyments. For can we believe that God hath propoſed ſuch a Supreme end to Man, as the greateſt part of Men ſhall never be able to obtain; ſuch as is placed beyond their Power, not poſſible to be attained by them? All other parts of the Creation infallibly fulfil their end; and ſhall Man alone be rendred incapable to arrive at that end, which God and Nature

Nature propoſed to him? Or ſhall ſuch an Happineſs be aſſigned to him, which a Sickneſs may defeat, the Malice of an Enemy may ruin, a petty Accident may overthrow? Let us not entertain ſuch mean Conceptions of our own Nature. If worldly Men will pretend to know no other Happineſs, than what ariſeth from Senſe, they muſt at leaſt confeſs the imperfection of their Happineſs from the poſſibility of Deprivation. And what is poſſible in this, cannot but be always feared by them, ſince they have no hope left beyond it. Vol. 2.

Laſtly, Let the continuance of their preſent Happineſs be aſſured to them, yet can it never be hoped, but little Croſſes will intervene; that all their Paſſions will not always be gratified; and then, even the leaſt Croſs, or the Diſappointment of any ſingle Paſſion, will be ſufficient to interrupt their whole ſatisfaction and ſpoil their Pleaſure. *Haman* enjoyed all which his Senſe, or moſt extravagant Luſts could crave, and had reaſon to hope the continuance of it; yet a petty Affront put upon him by *Mordecai* afflicted him beyond meaſure; took away the ſatisfaction of his Riches and Honour; and forced him amidſt them all to conclude himſelf unhappy.

Vol. 2. Temporal Felicity depends upon a complication of ſo many Cauſes, that it never can arrive at Perfection, ſince it is impoſſible that ſome of thoſe Cauſes ſhould not miſcarry; and the miſcarriage of any one will render the Operation of all the reſt ineffectual. It will not in that caſe be ſufficient to compenſate for the loſs of one, by the poſſeſſion of all other temporal Advantages; rather Man will conclude himſelf more unhappy in the abſence of that, than in the Preſence of all theſe. Nay the greater ſhare he obtains of other Benefits of fortune, the more he will afflict himſelf for the want of what he in vain Deſires; ſince the concurrence of ſo many Gifts of fortune moſt frequently produces a Haughtineſs of mind, which flatters it ſelf with a fond Opinion of its own worth and Greatneſs, and cannot bear the leaſt Diſappointment.

If then, Men devoted to the Pleaſures of this World have concluded themſelves unhappy amidſt the affluence of all worldly Enjoyments; if temporal Felicity be unable to ſatisfie the Deſires of the Soul, to fill its Capacities, or perfect its Nature; if it be attended with perpetual Care and Diſtractions; if often impoſſible to be obtained by us; and always poſſible

poſſible to be taken from us; if it may be defeated by petty Accidents and Croſſes, and that ſuch ſhould happen, cannot be avoided: If for theſe Reaſons, and many others which we cannot now inſiſt upon, they are unable to render any Man truly happy; what remains, but that we ſeek for true Happineſs ſomewhere elſe. If the former cannot be the Supreme end of Man, and if it be natural to us to direct all our Actions to ſome end; it will be neceſſary for us to find out ſome other end, and when found out, to apply our utmoſt Diligence to obtain it. Vol. 2.

And here perhaps human Reaſon, having thus far proceeded, might continue to grope in the dark, and after a tedious diſquiſition be unable to diſcover either the end or the means of obtaining it. God hath therefore, in Compaſſion to our Infirmities, marked out both the Nature and the means of Supreme Happineſs. The Nature of it is Peace of Conſcience here, and therein the hopes of the Fruition of God hereafter, which Hopes ſhall then be turned into Poſſeſſion: The means of it obedience to his Laws, and Faith in Chriſt. By theſe we ſhall obtain an Happineſs, which ſhall fill the utmoſt Capacities of the Soul, which ſhall be co-extended

Vol. 2. tended with the duration of it; which shall satisfie us but never weary us; which shall affect all the Faculties both of Soul and Body; which shall be interupted by no Crosses and Disasters; which will never expire, but be renewed every moment; which no adversity of Fortune, nor infirmity of Body, which neither the Malice of Men or Devils shall be able to take from us.

To a serious Application of your selves to obtain this blessed State, I hope what has been said will be no small Motive to you. You all desire Happiness; and if the Soul be once fully convinced, what is the only true Happiness, it cannot but move towards it, and exert all its Faculties in the Acquisition of it. After a firm perswasion, that this is indeed the end of Man, there needs no Exhortation to pursue it. The pursuit of it will then be no less natural, than the satisfying of Hunger, or any other reasonable Appetite.

The misfortune is, that we suffer our selves to be deluded by the impressions of Sense and unruly Passions, representing and amplifying to us the Happiness arising from the Fruition of carnal Pleasures and secular Delights; we are not unwiling

unwilling theſe Paſſions ſhould ariſe; we permit theſe falſe Judgments to be formed; we are pleaſed at firſt with the Deluſion, altho' conſcious of it; and at laſt become ſo far ſtupified, that we do not perceive it; until at laſt a terrible Affliction or the approaches of Death awaken the Soul, and revive its better Notions. What thoſe dreadful remembrancers may then do, Reaſon may *now* much more eaſily and more certainly effect; to reflect upon the Nature of worldly Enjoyments, to conſider their Vanity, and diſcover their Emptineſs. When this Conviction is throughly formed, we ſhall be even neceſſitated to look upward, and fix our hopes in Heaven, and then we are aſſured, that our Labours directed thither ſhall not miſcarry; that they ſhall be aſſiſted by God, promoted by his Spirit, and Crowned with Succeſs; Succeſs which will give us ſatisfaction of Mind here, and fulneſs of Joy hereafter. *To this Joy, may God*, &c. Vol. 2.

The

The Fourth SERMON.

Preach'd on the 23d. of *June*, 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Job XXXVII. 23, 24.

Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out; He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of juſtice: He will not afflict. Men do therefore fear him.

THE ground of all Religion, whether Natural or Revealed, conſiſts in the knowledge of the Nature of God, and of his Conduct in the Government of the World. The firſt repreſenteth him to Man, as a fit object of Adoration; the latter perſwadeth Man to adore him. With-

Without the first there would be no reason to adore him; without the latter no Obligation. The perfection therefore of any Religion consists in an accurate Delivery of these Matters; in giving right Notions of the Nature of God, and in teaching with certainty the method of his external Actions. The former is always the same, and admits no Variation; the latter may receive Improvements in relation to Man, and lay greater Obligations on him under one Dispensation than under another. Vol. 2.

So much of both may be known by the light of Reason, as may direct Men aright to the Worship of God, if they imploy their reason in a due manner; and convince them at the same time of their Obligation to worship him; but both may be mistaken in the natural use of the understanding; and when mistaken, will equally defeat the Worship of God; a mistake of the first Nature leading Men into Idolatry, of the second into Negligence and Impiety. It is not so easie indeed to mistake concerning the first, the Nature of God, which may easily be discerned by the weakest understanding, I mean so much of it, as serves to beget Notions of Religion in Men. All Men, whe-

Vol. 2. whether true Believers or Idolaters, agree in this common Notion of God, that he is a moſt perfect Being; and then ſurely it is no hard matter to determine whether Omnipotence, Omniſcience, Omnipreſence, and ſuch like, be neceſſary Perfections; without which a moſt perfect Being cannot ſubſiſt. Yet Mankind hath moſt miſerably miſtaken in this plain and eaſie matter; hath deified Creatures, which have none of all theſe Perfections, hath quitted ſometimes even the Notion of God, but oft-times corrupted it. And theſe miſtakes Revealed Religion doth rectifie; and reſtore to Men, what they had wilfully loſt, the knowledge of the Divine Nature.

But this is not our preſent Deſign, which concerns the external Actions of God, and his Government of the World, wherein it is no hard matter for Man to miſtake, deriving his knowledge from the light of Reaſon only. It is poſſible for ſuch a one to form ſuch right Conceptions of the external Conduct of God, from the Conſideration of his Attributes, as may incite him to the Worſhip of God, and direct him in it. But this perſwaſion will fall infinitely ſhort of that Conviction, and this Direction of that certainty,

tainty, which is to be had in Revealed Religions; and even in Revelations admit of greater or leſſer Degrees, according to the greater or leſſer manifeſtation of the Will of God therein, and his intended Benefits to the followers of that Revelation. So that however the primary Reaſons of worſhipping God continue the ſame in both Caſes, being drawn from the Attributes of God, which are always the ſame, yet in Revealed Religions they are both improved and enhanced, and alſo ſecured from the danger of Error. Vol. 2.

And how great that Danger is, the Scripture fully declareth to us, by the Example of *Job* and his Friends. That whole Book being employed in diſcourſing of the Laws and method of the Divine Government in relation to Man, as far as the light of Reaſon could diſcover. For none of them had yet received the benefit of Revelation, which was not made to them till after the Concluſion of their diſcourſe, in the end of the Book. All of them both knew and worſhipped the true God, were eminent for Wiſdom in their Generations, and one of them approved by an extraordinary Teſtimony of God himſelf; yet all of them propoſed ſo many different Opinions concerning the external

Vol. 2. external Government of God; and all of them were miſtaken. All of them agreed in the common Reaſons of the worſhip of God, yet all of them miſtook in the Application of thoſe Attributes from whence they were formed. The Reaſons are well ſummed up in the words of my Text; and in them alſo ſufficient matter to confute the ſeveral Errors propoſed by theſe Men. *Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out: He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of juſtice: He will not afflict. Therefore do Men fear him.* The words therefore will naturally give me an occaſion to Diſcourſe.

I. Of the Reaſon of the Worſhip of God, founded in the Attributes of the Text.

II. Of the Errors committed by *Job* and his Friends, which they drew indeed from theſe Attributes, but may more truly be confuted by them.

The Reaſon of the worſhip or fear of God among Men, is declared by Enumeration of thoſe Attributes, which are chiefly to be conſidered by us in the conception and worſhip of God. Our firſt Notion of him, and on which all the reſt are founded, is, that he enjoyeth all Perfections, which can meet in one and the ſame Being. And this is deſigned by the firſt

first part of the Text; where the word *Almighty* in our Translation, signifieth *All-sufficient* or *supremely perfect*, in the Original. We admire single Perfections in other Objects; in one Power, in another Wisdom, in a third Vertue; and these not only possessed by so many several Objects, but also in a limited manner. Yet we revere and admire these single and limited Perfections, wheresoever we find them, and acknowledge it to be unjust to deny that Deference which is due to them. When therefore all imaginable Perfections are conjoyned in God, it is but natural to conclude that all the Fear, the Awe, the Regard, the Love we pay to other Objects, upon account of those single Perfections, we discover in them, ought to be conjoyned, when we reflect on God, and be paid as a just Debt to him. Whosoever considers them, may perhaps thro' a stupid or depraved Mind, omit or even reject the Worship of God; but at the same time he cannot deny him to be most worthy to be Worshipped. Vol. 2.

In the next place, as the Nature of God is infinite, so his Actions are unsearchable; or, as it is in the Text, *We cannot find him out.* Which may respect either the incomprehensible Essence of

Vol. 2. the Deity, or the unſearchableneſs of his Judgments in the Government of the World. As to the firſt, it is no ſmall Argument of our Obligation to render the moſt profound Adoration to him, that he is of infinite Dignity, ſo great that we cannot comprehend it or meaſure the extent of it. Here below, we proportion our Eſteem and Devotion to the Merits and Dignity of Perſons; and ſhould confeſs our ſelves unjuſt, if we made not a diſtinction therein. The ſame Rules of Juſtice therefore, will require us to form of God the moſt noble Conception, to render to him the moſt humble Submiſſions which are poſſible to the Faculties of the Soul.

Again, if the Methods of the Divine Conduct be unknown and unſearchable to Man, this will yet farther raiſe our Opinion of the Infinity of his Nature; ſince if his external Effects exceed our Conception, much more will his Nature, the Cauſe and Fountain of them. This will alſo teach us not to enquire too curiouſly into the Secrets of his Providence, not to determine any thing raſhly concerning it, which is not revealed to us. Indeed when the Knowledge of the Rules of his Government is beſtowed on us by Revelation,

Revelation, we are firmly to believe it, and may without danger of Error and Preſumption apply thoſe Rules to particular Caſes. But as we ought not to have fixed any Rules to him, before we received the light of Revelation; ſo after the Reception of it, we are not to carry our Conjectures of Aſſertions beyond what is revealed to us. We might conclude indeed without it, that God could do nothing unjuſt, nothing which is not Holy: But this would not have warranted us to determine the way, wherein his Juſtice and Holineſs ſhould exert themſelves by external Effects. Vol. 2.

Upon account of theſe Attributes God is moſt worthy of Adoration; but there wants yet ſomewhat to perſwade Men to pay that Tribute to God. If neither Hope nor Fear interpoſed, Men would eſteem themſelves unconcerned in the Worſhip of God, the Obligation of it weak, the Trouble of it unneceſſary. This therefore is abundantly ſupplyed by the following Attributes; whereof the firſt is his Omnipotence; *He is excellent in power*, God is able to vindicate the Honour of his Name, by inflicting exemplary Puniſhments upon thoſe who neglect to worſhip him; or worſhip him in a man-

Vol. 2. ner unbecoming his Nature, and contrary to the light of Reaſon or Revelation. So then it is a moſt effectual Motive of Divine Worſhip to conſider, that as it is the Duty of Man to worſhip God, ſo it is moſt juſt; and if moſt juſt, muſt certainly be required by God; that if this Duty be neglected, we are in the hands of him to whom the Injury is offered, may be annihilated by a ſingle Nod, may be chaſtiſed with ſevere Puniſhments, may be rendred miſerable for ever.

This Attribute of Power, in Affairs of the World, produceth Fear and the Signs of external Reſpect, beyond all other Arguments. This ſecures the Authority of Laws, and Majeſty of Princes; that the one cannot be violated, the other cannot be contemned without Danger. This is generally ſuppoſed to have at firſt begat Idolatry; when Men following the report of their Senſes more than the light of Reaſon, fondly imagined, that their Princes, their Leaders or Conquerors, were the moſt powerful of all Beings; and upon that account rendred that Tribute to them which is due to Omnipotence, I mean Adoration. They found themſelves to be at their diſpoſal, their Lives at their Mercy; or extraordinary Actions

Actions effected by them; and believing Vol. 2.
theſe to be the moſt illuſtrious Marks of
Power, deified the Poſſeſſors of them. If
then the Proſpect of that little Power,
which is veſted in Men, could procure
Adoration from thoſe who followed the
Dictates of their Senſes only; much more
will the *excellence* of the Divine Power,
as it is here called, induce Men to the
Worſhip of God, being manifeſted both
from Senſe and Reaſon.

In mortal Men, Power, far from being adorable, may oftimes become execrable, may occaſion the unhappineſs of others, may adminiſter Aſſiſtance to ſins and violence; and notwithſtanding ſuch wicked Power may awe and terrifie Men (as both ancient and modern Idolaters have worſhipped Devils, leſt they ſhould hurt them) this will never create an internal Reverence in Men, in which chiefly Adoration conſiſts. The moſt exalted Power of finite Beings cannot reſcue them from their own Imperfections; receiveth Limits, and is capable of Diſſolution. If yet ſuch a Power can ſtrike thy Mind, can affright thee from performing what is diſpleaſing to it; if thou dareſt not reſiſt its Commands, and quietly ſubmitteſt to it; how much more art

Vol. 2. thou obliged to revere the Omnipotence of God, where Power and Goodneſs are ſweetly joyned together, where no Limitations can be found, nothing excluded from the reach of it, no Ceſſation to be expected? If thou pretendeſt not to know this Power, conſider the Nature of God, and judge whether Omnipotence be not a neceſſary Attribute of a moſt perfect Being. If thou appealeſt to Senſe, view the Fabrick of the World, paſs through Heaven and Earth; thou ſhalt diſcover the Footſteps of Omnipotence in every part of it. If thou pretendeſt yet not to ſee what is moſt evident, reflect upon the Faculties of thy own Soul, and ſay, who gave them to thee? Conſider the Fabrick of thy Body, who formed it for thee. Theſe are undeniable Marks of thy Subjection to an Almighty Power, which even if thou doſt deny, it is by Faculties of Soul and Body created by *him*, that thou canſt deny it.

Thus we perceive, that the Power of God is uncontroulable and infinite; that he is able to inflict whatſoever Puniſhment he pleaſeth on his diſobedient Creatures. And then leſt we ſhould vainly imagine this Power to be uſeleſs in reſpect of us, and like antiquated Laws,

never

never put in Execution, we are told in the next place; that God is excellent in *Judgment* alſo; that he will moſt certainly judge Mankind, and puniſh them for the Omiſſion of their Duty. For ſo *Judgment* doth almoſt every where ſignifie in Scripture, the infliction of Puniſhment upon Delinquents. This is the chief Mark of the Divine Government of the World, to take a Survey of the Actions of Men, and puniſh them for the Violation of thoſe publick Laws, which are fixed to Mankind and preſcribed for their direction. Nothing but the moſt extreme ſtupidity can defeat the Succeſs of this Argument of Divine Worſhip; ſince this equally affects both the Wiſe and Fooliſh, by ſtriking their Imaginations with the fear of Miſery. A Fear which will affect the Mind of Man, when no other Argument can prevail. The Perfections of God may be ſlighted; the Infinity of his Nature may be neglected; his Power may be derided, when not put in execution; but the belief of Judgment to be inflicted upon Sinners will awaken the Conſciences, and affright the Thoughts of Men; And that even altho' the manner of the Execution of this Judgment ſhould be unknown to them: Vol. 2.

Vol. 2. as in natural Religion. For let the Puniſhments be uncertain as to their quality; let the time of their Execution be hid from Sinners; yet this they cannot but know, that God is the Supreme Governour of the World; that as ſuch he will exerciſe Judgment; and that as his Power exceeds that of the moſt formidable Judicature on Earth, ſo his Puniſhments will be correſpondent, exceeding what Man can inflict.

And herein appears the *excellence* of this Judgment, mentioned in the Text. Humane Judicatures can take hold only of the external Actions of Men, and even theſe may ſometimes be hid from them; the Power of the Offender may ſet him above the reach of Puniſhments; they may be evaded by crafty Defences, may be hindred by the Interpoſition of ſome greater Power, may be avoided by Death, and will certainly be finiſhed by it. But in the Execution of the Divine Judgment it is far otherwiſe: There the moſt ſecret Actions of Men are call'd in queſtion, even their Thoughts cannot eſcape diſcovery. The Judge cannot be blinded by crafty Inſinuations, nor diverted from his Reſolution by extraneous Cauſes. Nothing can reſcue us out of his hands, not even

even Death it ſelf; his Dominion extends beyond the Grave, reaches the Soul of Man, and ſurmounts the reſiſtance of all created Beings. If then Fear can affect Men; if Puniſhments can deter them; if Power can awe them; if the certainty of all theſe can convince them; they do all combine to ſecure the Worſhip of God, and continue Religion in Mankind. Vol. 2.

But then, leſt we ſhould ſeem Slaves to God, and Servants, through Fear only, he diſpenſeth Rewards as well as Puniſhments to Men. *He is excellent in plenty of Juſtice*, in the words of the Text. He rewards the Obedience of Men to his Precepts, not becauſe any Reward was due to them, but becauſe he delighteth in diſpenſing his Benefits; and then his Juſtice will require, that he diſpenſe them to the moſt worthy. We are not ignorant, how powerful an Argument Intereſt is in moving the Hearts of Men. What draweth Attendants to Princes, or Servants to Great Men, but the Power of rewarding them, and the proſpect of Preferment to be attain'd by their Favours? This ſeldom fails to ſecure to them thoſe Duties, which are due from Dependants, Honour and Service.

And

Vol. 2. And if we would but raiſe our Souls from the Earth, and carry them beyond the Objects of Senſe, it would no leſs effectually ſecure what is due to God from us; Adoration of his Majeſty, and Obedience to his Laws. The Rewards to be attained are far greater, ſuch as the Donor will not, and ſuch as all the other Powers of the World cannot take away from us; ſuch as ſhall not be determined by Time, nor reſtrained by any Limitation. The aſſurance alſo of obtaining them is far more certain, being founded on the Promiſe of him, who can give what he pleaſeth, and will give what he Promiſeth; whereas the Favours expected from Men may be defeated by Forgetfulneſs, by Unfaithfulneſs; may be intercepted by others, may become impoſſible to be beſtowed. If then God by his Infinite and moſt certain Rewards cannot procure what Men obtain by their Petty and uncertain Favours, Fear and Reverence; we muſt deplore the Ingratitude and obſtinate Perverſeneſs of Men, who, refuſing to hearken to the Arguments of obedience propos'd by God, yield to thoſe propoſed by Men, which yet affect the ſame Paſſion (that of Deſire) but in a much lower Degree.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, to ſecure in our Minds ſuch Thoughts of God, as are befitting his Majeſty and Holineſs, leſt our Adoration of him ſhould be corrupted with any Suſpicions of Injuſtice entertained at the ſame time, it is added in the end of the Verſe, *He will not afflict.* In this Life, the Rules and Method, whereby God diſpenſeth his Rewards and Puniſhments, may be very obſcure to us. He may ſuffer the righteous to be afflicted; he may permit the wicked to Proſper; he may in appearance cut off the Hopes of good Men by preſent Miſeries, and encourage the Diſobedience of bad Men by temporal Felicity; *His ways may be unſearchable, and his judgments paſt finding out.* But from hence we muſt not conceive any Opinion of Injuſtice in God, or Imperfection in the Adminiſtration of his Government. Although the Secrets of Providence be unknown to us, this we are aſſured of, that he is infinitely Juſt and Holy, and that being ſuch, *he will not afflict.* Vol. 2.

The Myſterious Obſcurity of Providence herein, was the occaſion of the Miſtakes of *Job* and his Friends, which I propoſed, and come now to conſider, in the ſecond place.

To

Vol. 2. To Solve this Difficulty, every one of them formed a different Opinion; yet all came ſhort of Truth. *Eliphaz*, who ſpake firſt, aſſerted that God inflicted temporal Misfortunes on no Man, but by way of Puniſhment for ſome enormous Sins; and therefore urged *Job*, to confeſs his ſecret Sins, and give Glory to God, as it is XXII. 5. *Is not thy wickedneſs great, and thine iniquities infinite?* And ſo on: Where he affirmeth *Job* to be the greateſt of Sinners, only becauſe God had heaped extraordinary Calamities upon him.

Bildad maintained, that God might, as the ſupreme and abſolute Governour of the World, afflict Man without any reſpect to antecedent Sins; but then that he was bound in Juſtice to recompenſe it to him by ſubſequent Proſperity. For thus he expreſſeth himſelf, VIII. 6, 7. *If thou wert pure and upright; ſurely now he would awake for thee, and make the Habitation of thy Righteouſneſs proſperous. Though thy beginning was ſmall; yet thy latter end ſhould greatly increaſe.*

Zophar delivereth his Opinion throughout the whole XI. *Chap.* that God might in right of his ſupreme Power, lay the heavieſt Afflictions upon Men, without any

any reſpect either to Antecedent Sin, or ſubſequent Recompence. Vol. 2.

Elihu thought that God might afflict good and bad Men indifferently; but that if good Men received the Affliction humbly and with ſubmiſſion, and addreſſed themſelves to God by Prayer for the removal of it; and if bad Men were moved to repent through it, God would remove the Affliction, and reſtore Proſperity to them, eſpecially if an Angel interceded for them, as he expreſſeth himſelf at large in the XXXIII. *Chap.*

Laſtly, *Job*, whatever his Opinion might be, while his Calamity was yet freſh, and any hopes remained of the ſpeedy removal of it; or however he might alter his Judgment after the Revelation of God, in the end of the Book; yet in the midſt of his Troubles, when the Diſeaſe grew inveterate, and no hope of Delivery yet appeared; he ſeems to have thought, that God inter-medled not in the proceedings of the World, and reſerved neither Rewards for the good, nor Puniſhments for the bad. Which Opinion he propoſeth chiefly in the XXI. *Chap.*

All theſe Opinions were alike erroneous, and yet all founded upon the Attributes of God; thoſe of *Eliphaz*, *Bildad* and

Vol. 2. and *Elihu*, upon his Juſtice; thoſe of *Zophar* and *Job*, upon his Power. The Errors of the Three firſt, plainly aroſe from hence, that they pretending to determine Matters above their knowledge, confined the Exerciſe of the Divine Judgment, and conſequently the Diſpenſation of Rewards and Puniſhments, to this Life only: Had this, which they all ſuppoſed, been indeed true, one at leaſt of their Opinions muſt neceſſarily have been received; otherwiſe the Juſtice of God could not be cleared.

But what ground had they to conclude, that God exerciſed his Judgments in this Life only? Might not the Nature of Man, the quality of the Rewards and puniſhments to be inflicted on an immaterial and immortal Soul, teach them that another World was a far more convenient Tribunal for this Judicature? Or if they knew not the Nature of the Rewards for want of Revelation, yet at leaſt the example of the Patriarchs, with which they were not unacquainted, and wherewith our Saviour afterwards convinced the Jews; might not, I ſay, the experience of their Afflictions and Troubles, have taught them, that God did not ultimately beſtow his Rewards, and conſequently

ſequently not his Puniſhments, in this Life? They had received glorious Promiſes of ſome extraordinary Benefits to be received from God, Promiſes, which might juſtly make them expect ſome eminent Advantages beyond the reſt of Mankind, yet none of all theſe juſt Expectations were ſatisfied in this World, wherein they were Strangers and Pilgrims, expoſed to Injuries, and troubled with frequent Afflictions, and that till Death; an invincible Argument, that God reſerved the Conſummation of their Hopes and his Promiſes to another Life.

As to the Opinion of *Zophar*, that God might bring Afflictions on Men for no other end, than to demonſtrate his abſolute and arbitrary Power over Mankind, that overthroweth both the Wiſdom and Juſtice of God: It would render his Government Tyrannical, and even like to that of Hell, which Sports in the Miſery of Mankind. God is a moſt wiſe Being, and cannot do ſuch a vain Act; he is a moſt juſt Being, and cannot execute ſuch an unjuſt Sentence. He never afflicts, or proſpers Men by extraordinary Power in this Life, but either for their Reward, their Puniſhment, or their Correction. As for the Proſperity or Affliction, which may befall

Vol. 2. befal Men in the ordinary Courſe of the Government of the World, they may reſpect indeed none of all thoſe Ends, nor do they concern our preſent Caſe.

Laſtly, The Opinion of *Job*, that God interpoſeth not extraordinarily in the Affairs of Mankind, might be confuted from the ſame Attributes and Conſiderations. For we muſt not ſuppoſe that God allowed and ratified whatſoever he had ſaid, when he gave ſuch an illuſtrious Teſtimony of Integrity to him in the cloſe of the Book. That was only to vindicate him from the Aſperſions of his Friends, more particularly *Eliphaz* and *Elihu*, maintaining that his Afflictions had befallen him for the Enormity of his antecedent Sins. God confirmed not his Speeches made in anſwer to them by this Suffrage; and therefore *Job* himſelf deploreth the raſhneſs of his Opinion in XLII. 6. *Wherefore I abhor my ſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes.* And indeed nothing could be more falſe, or derogatory to the Majeſty of God, and the Preſervation of his Honour among Men. Only *Job* aſſerted not pertinaciouſly, as his Friends did their Opinions, he concluded not peremptorily, but only confeſſed, that he could not diſcover any extraordinary

nary interpoſition of God, by viſible Effects in this Life. Vol. 2.

An Opinion indeed, which too many have taken up; and ſome do yet maintain; but which cannot be allowed without the utter ruin of Religion, and Reaſon alſo. For do we not believe that God is infinitely good and juſt; that he is the ſupreme Governour of the World both in this Life, and after Death? But can we conceive *him* to be infinitely good, who after having created Man and ſetled him in the World, takes no farther care of him, abandons him to Chance, and there ſtops the Emanations of his Goodneſs? Can he be perfectly juſt, who makes no proviſion for the univerſal Calamities, or Oppreſſions of Mankind, which cannot but often happen notwithſtanding the ordinary Laws of his Government, which conſiſt only in maintaining the Courſe of Nature? Do we not deſtroy his Government, when we confine it only to another Life, or perhaps allow it no place in either? Since God hath created the World, the Government of it hath become neceſſary to him; and then not to derive at any time, any extraordinary influences upon it, will be no more commendable, than for a temporal Prince to ſit ſtill and

Vol. 2. be unconcerned for the Affairs of his Kingdom.

Thus far Reason will direct us; but then Revelation giveth us greater assurance of the constant and immediate Protection of God even in this Life. *We have the Promises of this Life, and of that which is to come*; we are told, That *all things shall work together for good to us*; That *whatsoever we shall ask of God with Faith*, excluding doubt, *he will do it*; and that *he will never leave us, nor forsake us.* All these and many more such Arguments, include an extraordinary influence of God, whereby he Administers the Government of the World, satisfies his Justice, and declares his Goodness.

Thus all the Attributes of God naturally lead us to the Worship of him; thus we cannot conceive his Nature without adoring it; cannot consider his Judgments and Justice without fearing his Displeasure, and obeying his Commands; thus are we on every side surrounded with Arguments of our Duty. *May God by his Grace improve the Efficacy of these Arguments to every one of us, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The

The Fifth SERMON.

Preach'd on the 4th. of *Auguſt*, 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Rom. XII. 3.

For I ſay unto you, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think.

AMONG all the miſcarriages of Mankind, none are more fatal, and at the ſame time more ordinary, than thoſe which proceed from a miſtaken Opinion of their own Nature or Merits. It is a deplorable misfortune indeed, that Man ſhould be ſubject to Miſtakes in a Matter ſo nearly concerning

Vol. 2 himſelf; that he, who pretends to Fathom Heaven and Earth, to diſcover the Properties of inviſible Beings, and extend his Knowledge both to precedent and future Times, ſhould remain in the dark as to his own Condition, and entertain erroneous Opinions of his own, either natural or acquired Merits.

Not to comprehend perfectly the Nature of God, is no wonder; the infinity of Eſſence ſurpaſſeth the Capacity of our finite Underſtandings. Not to conceive accurately the Properties of immaterial Beings, whether Angels or ſeparate Souls, may be excuſable; immateriality may eaſily confound an Apprehenſion inured only to ſenſible Objects: but to be miſtaken in the Nature, the Dignity, the Capacities of our ſelves, might be juſtly admired, if the frequency of ſuch Miſtakes did not take off the Admiration of them. If they extended no farther than Speculation, they might perhaps be pardoned, and befit the Conſideration of Philoſophers only and thinking Men; but when they reach to almoſt all the Actions of the Soul, introduce falſe Principles of Practice, which at laſt become fatal to the real Intereſt of Mankind, it will concern all Men to take notice of them, and to acquire more juſt Conceptions.

To

To this purpoſe Reaſon invites us, the Scripture directs us, to enter into the ſerious Conſideration of our ſelves, to contract our Thoughts, and not carry them beyond our Merits, to form a juſt Eſteem of our Perfections, and not in an over-weening Confidence of them, enlarge our Pretenſions beyond the Rules of Juſtice and Sobriety. Which is the ſum of the Exhortation delivered by the Apoſtle in the words of the Text; being directed indeed more particularly to thoſe Chriſtians of his time, who upon pretence of extraordinary Gifts, whether of Knowledge, Miracles or other Graces, deſpiſed their Fellow Chriſtians, who were leſs gifted; became proud and arrogant; invaded the Offices of their Superiors, and violated the publick Order of the Church; but delivered in ſuch general Terms, as equally oppoſe all other Errors of Men concerning the Dignity of their Nature, or the Greatneſs of their Merits; recommended by a peculiar Preface of Divine Authority. *For I ſay unto you, through the Grace given unto me*, directed unto all Chriſtians, *To every Man that is among you*; altho' all cannot be ſuppoſed to have been guilty of that particular Exorbitance; and propoſed in Vol. 2.

Vol. 2. ſuch a general Precept, as will obviate all the aforementioned Miſtakes and Inconveniencies: *Not to think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think.*

I ſhall conſider it then as ſuch a general Precept; and ſhew.

I. The Reaſonableneſs of it.

II. The Uſefulneſs of it.

I. The Reaſonableneſs of it will appear by comparing the fond and exorbitant Pretenſions of Men, with the Imperfections of their Nature. Man is apt falſly to perſwade himſelf that he is a greater and more noble ſort of Being, than he really is. He pleaſeth himſelf with vaſt Conceptions of his own Dignity, and upon Confidence of them raiſeth his Pretenſions to Matters beyond his Capacity, at leaſt beyond his Merit.

This was the Original of all the misfortunes of Mankind; from hence was derived the Fall of our firſt Parents; to this we are to aſcribe our preſent and future Miſery. The wicked Angels had led the way, who were no ſooner created, but reflecting on the Excellency of their Nature, the Dignity of their Order, and the Capacity of their Underſtandings, became Proud and Inſolent, rebelled againſt God, and attempted an Independency on the

the Crown of Heaven. Man ſoon followed the Example of thoſe wicked Spirits; who reflecting on the Faculties of his own Soul, which were then intire and vigorous, exalted with the Happineſs of his preſent Condition, which was then free from Cares and Croſſes, entertained a fooliſh Ambition of improving his Nature to ſomewhat yet greater, even of making himſelf like to God himſelf; and ſo being falſely perſwaded by the Serpent, that the way to Compaſs his Deſigns, was to eat of the forbidden Fruit, he fell from his former Happineſs, and entailed Miſery upon all his Poſterity; whoſe Happineſs was from thence abated, their Faculties enervated, and their Perfections leſſened. Vol. 2.

Yet could not the dreadful Example of their firſt Parents, nor the Conſecience of their much greater Imperfections divert ſucceeding Mankind from engaging themſelves in the ſame Miſtakes. They loſt the Dignity, but retained the Pride of their Forefathers, keep up their Pretenſions, and flatter themſelves with an over-great Opinion of their own Perfections. For not to mention the Impiety of Atheiſts, who pretend to be wholly independent from God, and deny to have re-

Vol. 2. ceived their Exiſtence from him; to omit the Profaneſs of ancient Epicureans, and many modern Deiſts, who diſown his Government of the World, and imagine themſelves to be freed abſolutely from his Dominion; even thoſe who own the Exiſtence of God, his Government of the World, and their own Dependence on him, ſtill continue extravagant Pretences to greater Perfections, than were deſigned for them. We commonly imagine our ſelves to be the top of the Creation; and that all other Beings, Heaven and Earth, Angels and Animals, were created merely for our Service. Hence we form a lofty Conceit of our own Excellence, and look down upon other Creatures with diſdain; we grow angry, if Heaven and Earth do not continually conſpire to advance our Intereſts; we think our ſelves injured, if the general Laws of Providence be not violated for the Promotion of our Concerns; we project extraordinary Schemes of Happineſs, & then are apt to murmur againſt God, if they are not affected. We ſcorn *that* imperfect Happineſs, which his Providence hath aſſigned us in the World; we eſteem it inferiour to the ſuppoſed Dignity of our Nature, and think it impoſſible, that ſo noble

noble a Being ſhould not enjoy ſome greater Happineſs, than what we find belongs to us in this Life. Vol. 2.

This Happineſs moſt Men place in the ſatisfaction of their Senſes; but then quickly perceiving that even more ignoble Beings enjoy the ſame ſatisfaction, they turmoil themſelves about enhancing the Pleaſures of Senſe. To this Purpoſe they either ſeek after Riches, or let looſe the Reins to Luxury; but after all, finding themſelves diſappointed, they become diſcontented, becauſe not obtaining a Happineſs correſpondent to the Eſteem of their own Merits. Or if any of better Education and more noble Thoughts, ſeek this Felicity in the Perfection of their Souls, yet are not they free from the like Miſtake, but aim at greater Perfections than their Nature will bear; carry their Enquiries into Matters too hard for them, and then become diſquieted, becauſe the Knowledge of ſuch things is denied to them; becauſe they find their Souls to be oft-times dull and devoid of Vigour, and cannot hinder the Perturbation of them by Commotions from the Body; and oft-times Experience the decay of their Faculties. With theſe Thoughts they afflict themſelves; and imagining their Nature

Vol. 2. Nature to be somewhat greater, than it really is, vainly endeavour to free themselves from all these Imperfections.

Such are the common mistakes of Mankind; mistakes which few escape. But then there are other particular, yet frequent Mistakes derived from the same Fountain, which are no less gross, and far more prejudicial to the Interests of another Life. From this irrational Opinion of their own Excellency many Men are tempted to believe, that they lay an Obligation upon God, when they execute his Commands and perform his Will. They imagine the Benefit redoundeth to God, and that it is no small kindness to him to hearken to his Proposals of Salvation: and thence are often drawn into a false Perswasion, that God will wink at their Impenitence, rather than forfeit the satisfaction of saving them.

This Error hath prevailed so far, that among many Christians it is believed, that God may in a strict sense be made a Debtor to Man by works of Supererogation: and others perswade themselves into a belief of particular Decrees of Election and Predestination made in Favour of them. They may pretend indeed for the ground of their Perswasion the arbitrary

trary Will of God, but the true Foundation of it will be diſcovered to be no other than a proud Opinion of their Excellency beyond their fellow Chriſtians; which makes them arrogant and moroſe, and ſo poſſeſſeth their Brains, that they imagine God to be in Love with them, and ready to relax the general Terms of Salvation, and forego his Commands of a ſtrict Obedience, for their ſakes. This falſe perſwaſion ſometimes advanceth ſo far, as to believe themſelves placed by their extraordinary, and at the ſame time unaccountable Excellency, beyond the Obligation of the common Laws and Diſcipline of the Church, and thence boldly invade thoſe Offices which were never entruſted to them, and diſturb the publick Order of the Church, as not obliged to perform thoſe Duties which are owing to the whole Church in general, and to all the Members of it in particular; which Offence the Apoſtle more particularly complains of in this place. Vol. 2.

Theſe are the moſt notorious Errors which proceed from the unreaſonable Conceit of Men concerning their own worth. If we enquire into the Foundation of all theſe Pretences, we ſhall find them

Vol. 2. them very frivolous. Man is far from such an excellent Being, as these Pretences suppose him to be. His Original is mean and common to him with the most ignoble Animals. While yet an Infant, nothing can be discovered in him, which distinguishes him from brute Beasts, except a greater Inability of helping himself. Nothing of Reason can be discerned in him, which must afterwards be instilled by Degrees, by the Care and Diligence of others; or if born with him, yet exerts it self but slowly, and would never become considerable without the direction of others. So that it is no ill Conceit of the Philosopher, that Man at first is born an Animal, and afterwards becomes rational. Were it not for this Education, it is not improbable, that Man would creep upon all four, and imitate Beasts as well in the posture of his Body, as in the brutishness of his Life. When after a thousand Chances, which might have destroyed him, he is grown up to be a Man, he still leads a more precarious Life, than any other part of the Creation. If any one of the Elements perform not their Office; if the Earth should deny her Fruits, or the Air its benign Influences; if any one of ten thou-

sand

ſand poſſible Accidents ſhould light upon him, his Life is ended; which whilſt it continueth, is perplexed with continual Cares, turmoiled with conſtant Labours, expoſed to infinite Adverſities, and after all ſupported with inconſiderable Pleaſures. Vol. 2.

For what greater Matter do we enjoy here below, than more ignoble Creatures do? Length of Life, Agility, Accuracy of Senſe, ſatisfaction of it, and all carnal Pleaſures are even common to them. We can imploy indeed the Thoughts of a Rational Soul, which is more than they can do; but alas this Priviledge would have been ſcarce deſireable, had not God promoted Arts and Sciences among Men, by raiſing their Apprehenſions at firſt with extraordinary Revelations. For although God did not at firſt reveal theſe Arts and Sciences, yet would Man never have obtained that Sagacity, which was neceſſary to the Invention of them, if God had not raiſed them from the preſent Objects of Senſe, and excited them to the Improvement of Knowledge, by communicating to them ſupernatural Revelations. That part, and that the greateſt part of Mankind, which have not yet received thoſe Advantages, do ſo little exerciſe

Vol. 2. exercise these Faculties of the Soul; that it would be no great increase of the Happiness of an unthinking Beast, to be put into their Condition. Or if all Men could naturally obtain clear and noble Thoughts of things: yet would this but add little to their Happiness; while uncertain of its future State for want of Revelation.

To a Soul which graspeth Eternity, it cannot but be a continual Affliction to reflect upon the certainty of Death, and the uncertainty of what will succeed it. If he endeavours to remove these melancholly Thoughts by sensual Pleasures, he will find little satisfaction in them, if he gives himself up wholly to them, he will soon grow weary of them. When he hath run through all the Scenes of Pleasure, and looks back upon his Enjoyments, he will confess the Emptiness of them, and scarce desire to retrieve them. Such a Man when he comes to die, may perhaps wish to live over his Life again, but then 'tis only in Hopes of obtaining greater Happiness therein than he did before. Scarce any Man, however having plentifully enjoyed all the satisfaction of this Life; if his Life could be renewed to him upon Condition of living again in the same

ſame and in no other manner than he did before, would eſteem it any great Benefit. He might perhaps accept it through fear of Death; becauſe he knows not what it is to die: but for the intrinſick Merit of it, he would hardly judge it to be deſirable. Such is the Condition of humane Life conſidered in a natural State, and what great Excellency can be diſcovered in all this, which may nouriſh our Pride, or enlarge our pretences? So inconſiderable a part of the Univerſe is Mankind. Vol. 2.

And then, ſhall ſo mean a Being vie with God, require the general Laws of Providence to be over-ruled for his ſake, become ſwoln with Pride, think himſelf more worthy than all the reſt of the Creation, and continually aſpire to greater Privileges, than were at firſt aſſigned to him? Alas poor Mortal, however thou mayeſt advance thy Pretences, and flatter thy ſelf with a fond Opinion of thy own Greatneſs; that Body which thou carrieſt about with thee, and canſt not ſhake off; that very Body upon which, and the dependances of it, thou ſo much valueſt thy ſelf, proclaim thy Imperfection. If I ſhould call thee Duſt and Aſhes; thy end will manifeſt thee to be no more; but this

Vol. 2. this will only expreſs thy Infirmity: I want a word to expreſs the Vanity of thy mind. If I ſhould call thee nothing; thy ſelf haſt often confeſſed thy ſelf to be worſe than nothing; when amidſt the Croſſes of fortune, or torments of Diſeaſes, thou haſt often wiſhed to become nothing, for to avoid them; and wilt once again wiſh it after Death, if thou doſt not correct thy fooliſh Arrogance. So little Reaſon hath Man in general to value himſelf upon the Excellency of his Nature; and as to the divers Pretentions before-mentioned, hath yet much leſs.

If Atheiſts pretend an independent Exiſtence from God, let them demonſtrate it by continuing their Exiſtence for ever. If they could at firſt beſtow Exiſtence upon themſelves, they may by the ſame Power always continue it: if this exceeds their Ability, much more will the other. If Deiſts aſſert the Actions of Man to be uncontrouled by God, and the Government of the World to be wholly neglected by him; let them reconcile to ſuch ſtupid Negligence the eternal Attributes of Juſtice, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, which they allow to be in God; let them ſtifle, if they can, the Checks of their Con-

Conſcience for Sins committed in ſecret; and ſolve the undeniable Characters of extraordinary Providence interpoſing in the World. Vol. 2.

Theſe impious Opinions indeed cannot be received by the followers of any revealed Religion; but the others may.

As firſt, That all other parts of the Creation were made for the ſake, and the ſervice of Man alone. An Opinion, which however generally taken up by Men, and in ſome meaſure Uſeful to excite their Gratitude to their Creator, yet ſeems to have proceeded from too great an eſteem of humane Nature, and tendeth directly to foment its Pride. It is certain indeed, that almoſt all parts of the viſible World are ſubſervient to the uſe of Man; that God hath not denied to us the uſe of any one of them; in which ſenſe it may indeed be ſaid, that all things were created for the uſe of Man; as it is ſaid in Scripture, *Man was created for the Woman, and the Woman for the Man*, that is, not for that end alone, but for that among other Reaſons. And thus even the Angels are ſubſervient to Man, being ſent forth as *Miniſtring Spirits* to ſuch, as *are heirs of Salvation.*

Vol. 2. But to imagine that all things were Created only for the uſe and the ſake of Man, hath no appearance of Truth. To affirm that of the bleſſed Angels, who are ſo far ſuperiour to us in Dignity, would be an intolerable Arrogance; and to aſſert it even of other created Beings, would be a vain Preſumption. Perhaps not the thouſandth part of the Univerſe is viſible to us; And then what are we concerned in ſo many vaſt Orbs as are beyond our Heavens? I know many have imagined them to have been created for the Seat of God, and the Reception of our glorified Bodies after the Reſurrection; but that is too groſs a Conceit to need any Refutation. Even in the viſible World no ſmall part of the Creation lays undiſcovered, and not a little of what we know is wholly unuſeful to us. It becomes us rather with Reverence to reflect upon our Subjection to God our common Creatour, than endeavour to ſet our ſelves before the reſt of the Creation, and flatter our ſelves into an ambitious Opinion of an Univerſal Monarchy.

In the next place to aſcribe ſo much Excellency to our Nature, as to imagine that the general Laws of Providence ought

ought to be violated for the Convenience of it, is a Pride exceeding all Compariſon; as if the petty Intereſts of Man in this Life were of greater moment, than the Preſervation of the publick Order, and therein the Harmony of the World. Is it not ſufficient to have received from God the benefit of Exiſtence, to enjoy all the Bleſſings of Earth and Heaven, which the ordinary courſe of Nature, directed by the Author of it, beſtoweth on us; but the Fabrick of the World muſt be overturned, and the general Laws of its Government be reverſed for us? Yet this unreaſonable Expectation generally ſeizeth Men in Afflictions; when all the hard Words which they heap upon adverſe Fortune, are directed againſt the Divine Government of the World; the impartial Execution of which, without reſpect to the little Intereſts of private Men, produceth that diverſity of Accidents, which is generally called Fortune.

Farther, to murmur at the Divine Adminiſtration of the World, becauſe no more excellent or more certain Happineſs is aſſigned to Men in this Life, is an effect of the ſame unreaſonable Ambition of being more noble Creatures than we re-

Vol. 2. ally are. For while we are a compound of Soul and Body, endued with groſs Organs of Senſe, and ſubject to the publick Order of the World, it is impoſſible that our Pleaſures ſhould be other than groſs, and adapted to the Organ of their Reception, that is, our Senſe. We may tire our ſelves in hunting after new Methods of Happineſs, and afflict our ſelves in the Diſappointment of them; but while our Natures continue to be what they are, and the ſame Order is preſerved in the World, it is impoſſible that the Pleaſures of Life ſhould be any other than what they are, that is, mean in their own Nature, and uncertain in their Duration. To propoſe the acquiſition of a compleat Knowledge of all things in this Life, of an abſolute imperturbation of Mind, and conſtant Infallibility, is no leſs Vain; and to boaſt of ſuch Perfections as ſome have done, little leſs than Madneſs. Our preſent Nature admitteth no ſuch Improvements, which while we are content to own, we muſt alſo own thoſe Imperfections which neceſſarily do attend it.

Errors of this nature in matters of Religion, are yet much more Dangerous, and at the ſame time more unreaſonable, be-

cauſe

cauſe not founded in internal Perfections of our Nature; but in extraneous Advantages, ſuch as the extraordinary and unaccountable Favour of God, whereby he prefers ſome Men before others, without any reſpect to the Merits or Demerits of either. An eaſie way indeed of gaining Heaven; and, as what flatters the Ambition of Men, is commonly acceptable to them, a pleaſing Deluſion. But ſuch Men are to know, that altho' themſelves proceed herein without any other Principles than a ſtrong Imagination prompted by a vehement Pride; yet that the moſt wiſe God never Acts without ſufficient Reaſon, is not to be ſwayed by any Partiality, and Diſpenſeth his Favours with the moſt exact Juſtice. If they believe God will overſee Faults in them, which he will not paſs by in others; they prefer themſelves to the ineſtimable Blood of the Son of God, which being ſhed to purchaſe a particular Covenant of Remiſſion of Sins, they fondly imagine that the Conditions of it ſhall be Diſpenſed with for their ſake. Vol. 2.

Laſtly, If any imagine themſelves to lay an Obligation upon God by their own Acts of Piety and Obedience, this indeed will be a ſtrong Perſwaſion of ex-

Vol. 2. traordinary Dignity, ſince it implies an abſolute Independency from God. But as this is Blaſphemous, ſo the Belief of that is highly Criminal. If we performed an exact and unfining Obedience, we ſhould ſtill do no more than our Duty; it is what we owed to God in Right of our Creation and Dependence on him. And then ſurely even in Affairs of this Life, we do not believe our ſelves to have obliged any Perſon, when we pay a juſt Debt to him. But if we reflect upon our many Sins, more numerous than our Acts of Obedience; and conſider that the firſt is the ſole Act of our own Will, the latter the effect of the Grace of God enabling us and working with us; that the firſt is always perfect; the latter, even when beſt, ſtill imperfect; we ſhall find abundant Arguments of Humility, but none of Arrogance.

II. The uſefulneſs of this Exhortation of the Apoſtle, and what hath been Diſcourſed by me in the Proſecution of it, appears not only in preventing theſe fatal Errors, which have been markt out, and oppoſed by us; but alſo extends to many Actions of Life and Duties of Religion.

As

As first, This will secure to us constant Peace and Satisfaction of Mind, amidst all the inconveniences of Life. Whatsoever is wont to render the Mind of Man uneasie, may be reduced either to the want of some desired Good, or the presence of some vexatious Evil. And herein Men put no Bounds to their Desires or Resentments. They passionately desire the acquisition of some Good, or removal of some Evil, which is sometimes impossible in Nature, and oft-times denied them by the ordinary Providence of God. Hereupon they grow Discontented, many times repine against God, and think themselves injured; and all upon a mistaken supposal of their deserving whatsoever they shall desire. Whereas if they would contract their ambitious Desires and think Soberly, as the Apostle adviseth; they would soon be convinced, that Man is no such excellent Creature, for whose sake the ordinary course of the World should be changed, or God work Miracles to please his Fancy. That if Infirmities and Diseases attend his Body, it is no more than the natural Consequence of the Constitution of it. If adverse Fortune doth afflict him, it is an effect of the steady Continuation of the same general

Vol. 2. Laws of Providence in the Univerſe, whereof himſelf is but an inconſiderable Member. If the grant of his Deſires be denied to him, it is no Wonder; his Merits are too ſmall to require the Performance of all his Wiſhes. If all theſe together trouble him, he hath no injury done unto him, he cannot accuſe Heaven of Injuſtice. All theſe Inconveniences are the neceſſary Conſequences of his Nature, and then if he be willing to continue his Exiſtence, it is no leſs than abſurd to deſire to change the Properties of it. If he murmurs againſt God, becauſe his Nature is not more Excellent, he ſhews himſelf yet more Unreaſonable; ſince all proceeds from the free Gift of our Creator, to whom we ought rather to be thankful, that we are raiſed above the Order of Beaſts, than repine becauſe we are ſet beneath the Dignity of Angels.

Secondly, this will teach us Humility; which is nothing elſe but a ſobriety of Thought, or juſt eſteem of our own Merits: And that firſt with our fellow Chriſtians; which was the peculiar deſign of the Apoſtle, when he laid down this general Precept, directing it againſt thoſe, who upon ſuppoſal of their extraordinary

Merits

Merits above other Men, boasted of a particular Favour with God, despised their Brethren as Carnal and perhaps Reprobate, made Ostentation of those Graces which were the free Gift of God, or pretended to those which really they did not possess: And in Confidence of either invaded those Offices in the Church, which were not committed to them, violated the Rules of Ecclesiastical Discipline, and presumed to exempt themselves from the Obligation of it. Such Spiritual Pride hath in all Ages continued to infest the Church, and still continues to molest it. But since I have hitherto waved the Prosecution of this particular Design of the Apostle, I will return to the more general Use of his Exhortation, and observe in the last place, That. Vol. 2.

3. This will teach us Humility towards God, and give us a just Idea of our relation to him. It is almost impossible to form any rational Act of Adoration to him, without obtaining a true Notion of the infinite Distance betwixt him and us: That there is nothing in our Nature which could attract his Love; that our most perfect Obedience can confer no Benefit upon him; that neither our celebrating

Vol. 2. brating him on Earth, nor our Society in Heaven will add to the infinity of his preſent Happineſs. It will demonſtrate the inconceivable Greatneſs of the Divine Mercy towards us, in ſending his Son to dye for us, in proclaiming Pardon to our Sins, in offering terms of Salvation to us, when nothing could be found in us, which could deſerve ſo great a Favor. It will add to the Love of Chriſt, that he was content to lay down his Life for ſuch inconſiderable Creatures; and thereby not only beſtow upon us one full Pardon of all precedent Sins, but renew his Pardons, as often as Men ſhould ſincerely renew their Repentance; in giving aſſurances to us of all this by the Participation of his own precious Body and Blood, which for that purpoſe ſhould be for ever continued and often celebrated in the Church.

To this whoſoever approacheth with Humility, Faith and Repentance, will aſſuredly receive Remiſſion of his Sins paſt, and Grace to avoid them for the future. But without theſe preparative Diſpoſitions of Mind, it is vain to expect the Benefit, upon a preſumptuous Opinion of a peculiar unaccountable Love of God, diſpenſing with the Neceſſities of

of these Conditions in any one; or in- Vol. 2.
dulging to him more than to another. Such are the Presumptions indeed, and such is the ordinary Success of Favorites on Earth, where Favour is often distributed not according to the Merits, but the Fancies of Men. But with God it is otherwise; the Reasons of whose Favour are certain, fixed, and universal: Equally distributed to all who shall perform the Conditions of it; bestowed on none, who shall not qualifie himself by performance of these Conditions. May we all therefore upon a full Conviction of the impartiality of God in the distribution of his Favours, seriously apply our selves to the acquisition of 'em, by the ordinary and certain Means. Then shall we not doubt to obtain our Desires, the assurance of which our Lord giveth to us in this blessed Sacrament; that as surely as we here eat his Flesh and drink his Blood, so surely will he compleat his Promises to us of Happiness hereafter.

The

The Sixth SERMON.

PART I.

Preach'd on the 1ſt. of *September*, 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

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1 Pet. V. 8, 9.

Your Adverſary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about, ſeeking whom he may devour.
Whom reſiſt ſtedfaſt in the Faith.—

IT is not the leaſt Benefit of the Chriſtian Religion, that it makes known to Men the Cauſes and Occaſions of that depravity of Nature and proneneſs to Sin, that averſion to their Duty and readineſs of complying with unlawful Suggeſtions, which all diſcover in themſelves. All cannot but take notice, that it

it is not without Labour and Difficulty, Vol. 2.
without aſſiduous Care and Vigilancy, ~~~
that any habits of Piety or Vertue can be formed, that it cannot be without ſtrugling againſt the natural Deſires, and overruling the Propenſity of the Soul; when negligence alone, or letting looſe the Reins to the natural Appetite will produce an habit of Vice: Whereas if we conſider the nature and the end of Man, we might rather hope the contrary; ſince the performance of his Duty is no more than the end of his Creation, and all things naturally tend to the acquiſition of their end: And Vice being a deviation from that end, doth thereby become unnatural.

Yet the Experience of that Depravation of the Will of Man, which we complain of, is ſo undeniable, that it hath put Men in all Ages upon enquiring into the Cauſes of it. Some reſolved it into Fate; others into the contexture of the Body; ſome into the malign Influences of the heavenly Bodies; and not a few into the innate Principles of the Soul. But as all theſe Conceptions were groſs in themſelves, they could give no ſatisfaction to the Mind of Man, and the matter would have ſtill continued to have been Unaccountable

Vol. 2. countable without the assistance of Revelation.

Nor doth all Revelation clear this Doubt: In the Jewish Religion little light was added to it; it is Christianity alone which fully manifests the Causes and Occasions of this Unhappiness; and as the discovery of Diseases facilitates the Cure of them, thereby enables us to avoid, or at least overcome the Contagion of it.

The Occasions, manifested by Revelation only, are two, the Corruption of our Nature succeeding the fall of *Adam*, or Original Sin; and the temptation of evil Spirits or Devils. The knowledge of both is of great concernment to us, that so we may be able to apply fit Remedies to them; yet the nature of both is little known by the ordinary Sort, and frequently mistaken by the more knowing Sort of Christians. I intend at this time to discourse of the latter, taking occasion from the words of the Apostle, who enforceth his Exhortation of Sobriety and Vigilance, from the consideration of the constant Danger whereto Christians are exposed by the perpetual Snares and Temptations of the Devil, who as their *Adversary*, *walketh about seeking* their Destruction; from the violence of Rage and Force

Force wherewith he assaults the Faithful, denoted by comparing him to the most terrible of Wild Beasts, when enraged, *as a roaring Lion*; and from the miserable Consequence of being seduced by him, which is, to *be devoured* by him; as utterly deprived of spiritual Life and Happiness, as that Man is of natural Life, who is devoured by a Wild Beast: For *Your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist stedfast in the Faith.* Vol. 2.

Which Words will oblige me to treat of,

I. The manner and method of the Temptations of the Devil.

II. Our Duty, Ability, and Means of resisting him.

First then, Altho' the manner, whereby the Devil tempteth us, be very obscure, as are all the Actions of immaterial Beings; and altho' it becomes us not to determine rashly, what we do not certainly know; yet our enquiries herein will be Lawful, while guided by Reason; and useful, because teaching us a Matter which doth so nearly concern us; rectifying our Mistakes, which may be fatal to us; and convincing the opposition of unbelieving Men, who mock at this

Vol. 2. this Article of our Belief. And here it is not my preſent purpoſe to prove the Exiſtence of ſuch evil Spirits. For altho' the common and conſtant Opinion of Mankind herein, produced by their viſible Effects, doth render it highly probable; altho' the nature of Things, and the Exiſtence of other immaterial Beings, differing only in accidental Qualities, prove it to be poſſible; and altho' Divine Revelation added to all theſe, hath put it beyond all Doubt; yet it is not my deſign to improve and urge theſe Arguments; ſince we enquire not after the Exiſtence of Devils, but the Manner of their Operation. It will however be neceſſary to ſpeak ſomewhat of their Nature, and the Motives which induce them to buſie themſelves in tempting Men.

Their Nature is the ſame with that of the bleſſed Angels, from whom they differ no otherwiſe, than as bad from good Men; ſave that as the Purity of Angels exceedeth that of the beſt Men: So the Wickedneſs of Devils exceedeth that of the worſt Men. They were once, at their firſt Creation, of the ſame Order with Angels, endued with the ſame Faculties, and enjoyed the ſame Happineſs; but when through Pride and Ambition they

they rebelled againſt God, diſobeyed his Commands, forſook that Station wherein he had placed them, and aimed at higher Dignities, they were deprived of their former Happineſs, and thrown down from Heaven. That whereas before they were infinitely happy in reflecting upon the Purity of their own Nature, the Favour of God, and that perpetual Communication of Light and Joy, which the Angels may be ſuppoſed to receive from God in extraordinary Emanations; they having now debaſed their Nature, by violating the end of their Creation, drew upon themſelves the diſpleaſure of God, and being deprived of the Fruition of any Divine Illuminations, were reduced into that State of Darkneſs which the Scripture deſcribeth. Vol. 2.

The thoughts of this Loſs could not but infinitely diſquiet them, as ſoon as they perceived the Diſappointment of their ambitious Deſigns; and as they are quick and knowing Spirits, they could not but immediately perceive their Unhappineſs, and make a juſt Eſtimate of the Greatneſs of it. The Senſe of this indeed could not but make them lament their Folly, and repent alſo, if a violent Sorrow only for paſt miſcarriages could

Vol. 2. be called Repentance. For that the Devils have ſuch ſorrow, cannot be denied; ſince in this conſiſts their Torment; but an unſucceſsful Sorrow, a Sorrow without ſubmiſſion to the juſt hand of God, a Sorrow which God will not accept, and which thefore will continue for ever, heightned by the greateſt Aggravations, as being the reſult of an unſpeakable, and which is more, irrecoverable Loſs; not to be ended by Death, nor diverted by a ſtupid inconſideration; but placed in a knowing, active, always thinking, and immortal Spirit.

Such a Spirit endued with ſuch active Faculties, and tormented with ſuch diſmal Thoughts of Unhappineſs, may well be ſuppoſed to conceive the utmoſt Degree of Rage and Malice. The Diſappointment of Pride naturally produceth thoſe Effects in Men; which Effects could not but be ſo much the ſtronger in the fallen Angels, by how much their Faculties were more lively and capacious. In Men indeed there are many ſins, which they are not capable of, as all thoſe which ariſe from the inordinate Appetite of the Body, as Luſt, Intemperance, and Covetouſneſs; but there are others, which are purely immaterial, and take

place

place only in the Soul, as Malice, Hatred, Envy, and Revenge. These, those unhappy Spirits poſſeſs in their full Perfection; which they continually exert either againſt God, who inflicted that Unhappineſs as as Puniſhment upon them, and altho' he might have annihilated them in their firſt Attempt, yet continues their Exiſtence to them, and therein their Miſery; or againſt Man, who by the Favour of God is made capable of attaining that Happineſs which they loſt; and placed in Dignity above them, who had endeavoured to ſet themſelves above their fellow Angels, and even equal to God himſelf. Vol. 2.

Inſpired with theſe wicked Thoughts, they employ themſelves continually in oppoſition to the Will of God; and becauſe this Oppoſition can take place, only in hindring the Happineſs of Man deſigned and deſired by God, uſe their utmoſt Endeavours to effect it. The Diſpoſition of all inanimate Bodies, and the Courſe of the material World, God hath determined by fixed and certain Laws of Motion, which it exceeds their Power to reverſe or change; but Man, being left to the uſe of his own Free-will, and not determined by the Power of God to

Vol. 2. any certain Actions, admits the interpoſition of evil Spirits. It is true, they alleviate not their own Torments, nor gain any real Advantage hereby; yet ought not this to make us believe, that they do not buſie themſelves in tempting of us; ſince it cannot be denied, that Man reaps no real Profit by his ſins, and yet it is too ſad a Truth, that Men do often ſin: and that falſe ſatisfaction, which Men receive from gratifying their Luſts, the Devils obtain by ſerving their Revenge and Envy.

So then, that the Devils ſhould deſire to draw us into the ſame Unhappineſs with themſelves, is no wonder. It is only ſomewhat difficult to conceive, how they ſhould effect their Deſires, and have any influence upon our Wills. To ſatisfie this Difficulty many have entertained falſe Notions of things, which it will be adviſeable to remove, before I enter into the direct Conſideration of the manner, whereby evil Spirits tempt us.

And firſt, It were needleſs to refute the Errrour of the Manichees or Valentinians, who gave to the Devil an independent Exiſtence from God and uncontrolable by him; nay all the Attributes of God, ſave that of Goodneſs: allowed him an infinite

infinite Power, whereby he could force the Wills of Men, and bind them to the Obſervation of his wicked Counſels. It is not much to be feared, that any Chriſtian would at this time be guilty of ſuch an abſurd Hereſie. Yet many perhaps, from the frequent Experience of their own yielding to the Temptations of the Devil, may be ſo far corrupted in Judgment, as to believe them irreſiſtible, or at leaſt plead this in excuſe of their Impenitence. To ſuch it may not be amiſs to obſerve, that it exceeds the Power of any finite Being to force the Will of Man; for that were to overthrow the very Eſſence of Man, and thereby change the ordinary Laws of Nature, to which all Creatures, and amongſt them Devils alſo, are ſubjected. Add to this the many Exhortations in Scripture to reſiſt their Temptations, which would have been vain, if theſe had been irreſiſtible; the Promiſe of God, alſo, that we ſhall *not be tempted above what we are able* to bear; which would not have taken place, if we could not overcome all Temptations; and the Experience of good Chriſtians, who daily reſiſt and ſurmount them. Even the worſt of Men might baffle them, if they would uſe the natural Power of

Vol. 2. their Souls, aſſiſted with that common Grace, which is denied to none. So that what the Apoſtle ſaith of ſome Men, 2 Tim. II. 26. *That they are taken captive by him at his Will*; is not to be underſtood without their own Conſent, yielding up themſelves to his Conduct, and voluntarily following his Suggeſtions; which alſo appears from the Apoſtles command to *Timothy* in the precedent words of inſtructing them, *That they may recover themſelves out of the ſnare of the Devil.*

A ſecond Errour in this Matter is, that God giveth to the Devil an extraordinary Power of tempting Men; a Miſtake, which may be obſerved in many of the ancient and even modern Writers, who hence take occaſion to magnifie the Grace of God, and the Merits of Mans obedience; the Firſt, in that God hath graciouſly contrived this impediment of obedience to Man, that ſo his obedience might become the more meritorious; and the latter, in that Man performs his Duty, notwithſtanding ſo great Impediments. This opinion, altho' received, would not in the leaſt clear our doubt, ſince it would ſtill remain to be enquired, in what manner the Devils exerciſe this delegated Power; but that it ſhould

not

not be admitted, it is enough to ſay, That it is injurious to the Honour of God. If it were *is*, God might juſtly be ſaid to tempt us, contrary to what the Apoſtle teacheth; *Let no man, when he is tempted, ſay, that he is tempted of God. For God tempteth no man.* Vol. 2.

It is impoſſible that ſo excellent a Being ſhould be guilty of ſuch double Dealing, as to command the Obſervation of his Laws, and at the ſame time tempt us to the Violation of them; to allure and enable us to obey him by Promiſes, by Threats, and by the aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, and to divert us from it by the interpoſition of evil Spirits employed by him. This were to aſcribe no leſs Injuſtice to him, than to the Devils themſelves. Nay to blacken *Him*, and to clear *them*, in the matter of Temptation. For if the Devils herein act by the extraordinary Power of God, they act in obedience to him, and then Temptation in them will be ſo far from being a Crime, that it will be an Act of Duty. On the other ſide, God could not be excuſed from the Imputation of all thoſe ill Conſequences, as might attend ſuch Temptation. For whatſoever is performed by a ſupernatural Power derived from him, is to

Vol. 2. be aſcribed to him only. Whatſoever happens in the ordinary Courſe of things, or is affected by the natural Power of any Creature, is only permitted by him, he is not to anſwer for it; but what is cauſed by his extraordinary Power delegated to any Creature, may truly be ſaid to be done by his direct Will and ſpecial Commiſſion.

So that to avoid the charging of Injuſtice upon God, we ought not to entertain any ſuch Opinion of him. He permits indeed the Devil to exert his Malice in the continual Temptation of Men; and hinders not his Operations by a perpetual interpoſition of his Almighty Power, nor would it be reaſonable for us to expect it, much leſs to conceive unworthy Thoughts of the Divine Government of the World, which hath ſo ſettled the Frame of things; that, as if the Pleaſures of the World, the violent craving of a ſenſual Appetite, and the Difficulty of Vertue were not ſufficient to divert Men from their Duty, the reſtleſs Sollicitation of evil Spirits is added to all theſe Arguments and Incentives to ſin. That it ſhould be ſo, was not a primary inſtitution, but a depravation of Nature, accidental to the order of the World at

firſt

first settled by the Author of it; which when once happened, God was no more obliged to remove or suspend by an extraordinary Miracle, than he is to hinder the bad example, Suggestions or Sollicitations of one Man to another. Vol. 2.

And this is no small Encouragement to us to oppose the assaults of evil Spirits with Constancy and Resolution, to consider, that they act not against us by any extraordinary Communication of an infinite Power; but by their own natural force only, which must be finite and limited. We read indeed in Scripture, that the Devils are sometimes extraordinarily employed by God to execute his Will, and that in relation to Mankind, in which case they act by a supernatural Power derived from him; but this extendeth not to Temptation. They were at their first Creation, intended for Ministerial Spirits, an Office which the Blessed Angels still enjoy; and although those wicked Spirits endeavoured to free themselves from Subjection to God, which endeavour occasioned their fall, yet, what is none of their least Torments, they are forced to acknowledge their subjection, by executing his Commands.

An eminent example of this we find to have

Vol. 2. have been frequent in the Apoſtles times, when Perſons who were Excommunicated by the Church with the higheſt cenſure, or formally delivered up to Satan, were ſeized on by him in a conſpicuous manner, and either wholly poſſeſſed by him and deprived of the uſe of their reaſon, or immediately afflicted with violent Diſeaſes. Thus in the caſe of the inceſtuous *Corinthian*, St. *Paul* commandeth the Governours of that Church ſolemnly to excommunicate him, *to deliver ſuch an one unto Satan, for the deſtruction of the Fleſh, that the Spirit may be ſaved in the day of the Lord Jeſus*, 1 Cor. V. An employment ſurely very ungrateful to the Devils, ſince nothing could tend more to the confirmation of the Chriſtian Faith, the Glory of God, and the conviction of Men, than ſuch viſible puniſhments, which conduced alſo to the Salvation even of thoſe, who were affected with them; ſtriking them with a due awe of the Almighty Power of God, and forcing them to enter into a ſerious conſideration of their unhappy State, and abhorrence of thoſe ſins, which occaſioned it. If ſuch exemplary puniſhments do not at this day attend the ſolemn Cenſures of the Church, it is for the ſame reaſon for which

which the Gift of Miracles is denied to it; altho it is to be believed, that the Devil acquires ſtill no ſmall power over ſuch Perſons, when the Sentence is rightly and juſtly pronounced, by their loſs of that ſupernatural Grace, which all true Chriſtians receive in their Communion with the Church, and in vertue of which they are chiefly enabled to *withſtand the wiles of the Devil.* Vol. 2.

Another example of this extraordinary power given to the Devils, may be that of Demoniacks, whoſe number ſeems to have been conſiderable at the time of our Saviour; and perhaps ſomewhat of a like, if not the ſame kind, may ſtill be found. That the Devils poſſeſſed theſe unhappy Perſons, not by their own natural power, but by extraordinary commiſſion derived from God, ſeems unqueſtionable. For it cannot be imagined, that any finite Being could by its ordinary power, alter the courſe of Nature. If ſo, Miracles would be no Argument of Divinity, and the foundation of all revealed Religion would fall. One of the moſt eminent and frequent Miracles of our Saviour, was the cure of Demoniacks. Now if the Devils could take poſſeſſion of Men by their own power,

Vol. 2. er, they might alſo quit that poſſeſſion at their will, and by quitting it opportunely, perform the ſame Miracle as to the Eyes of Men, which Chriſt himſelf did. They acted therefore herein as the Executioners of God, who might command and impower them to ſeize on the Bodies of Men, to alter their natural Conſtitutions, bereave them of the uſe of their Reaſon, and afflict them with continual Torments, in puniſhment of their Sins. For which reaſon alſo we may well believe theſe Demoniacks to have been more numerous among the Jews, than they ever were among Chriſtians. For the Covenant of the Jews included chiefly Temporal Rewards and Puniſhments; in vertue whereof the Honour of God was concerned to inflict dreadful Puniſhments upon Notorious Sinners, even in this Life; while he had not yet made fully known to the World his Reſolution of puniſhing Men in another Life.

But neither of theſe Caſes doth infer a Command or Commiſſion to the Devil to tempt Men; yet there is one inſtance in Scripture, which if not rightly underſtood, may ſeem to infer it: And that is the caſe of *Job*, whoſe Patience and Submiſſion

miſſion God tried by the Miniſtry of the Devil. It were enough to ſay, that ſuch extraordinary Examples are no more to be brought in proof and illuſtration of the ordinary conduct of God in relation to us, than was his Command to *Abraham* of offering up his Son *Iſaac*. However, neither here did the Devil receive any extraordinary Power of tempting *Job*, in a ſtrict Senſe. He was impowred indeed to raiſe that Tempeſt whereby the Sons of *Job* were buried in the ruins of their Houſe. But this is very agreeable with what I laid down before, and may well be ſuppoſed to have been in puniſhment of their Sins; of the greatneſs of which *Job* was ſo ſenſible, that he daily offered Sacrifice to God in expiation of them. The Devil was further enabled to deſtroy his Poſſeſſions, and torment his Body with a loathſome Diſeaſe. But all this directly affected not his Mind, which ſtill remained untouched, expoſed indeed to the ordinary aſſaults of the Devil, which aſſaults as they were not ſuſpended by God, ſo neither were they aſſiſted by him. Which aſſaults how they are affected by the natural power of the Devil, I come next to enquire, having firſt obſerved to you, that

Vol. 2. that although we could not conceive or explain the manner of it, we ſhould have no reaſonable cauſe to doubt of it. Our own experience will not ſuffer us to admit ſuch doubts, and that the Faculties and Operations of immaterial Beings are imperceptible to us, we have the example of our Soul, which although it be ſo nearly related to us, we know but very imperfectly the manner and ſpring of all her Actions.

The Devil is ſaid to tempt us two ways, properly and improperly. Innumerable Examples of each may be brought from Scripture. The latter is not hard to be conceived, and is no more than this; that as the Devil was the firſt Apoſtate and Rebel againſt God, and ſtill continueth his oppoſition to him, ſo he is the Captain and Head of all which oppoſeth God; as are the Luſts, the Paſſions, and the Sins of Men: Which being excited by ſublunary Objects, by worldly Pleaſures, whatſoever is done by theſe in oppoſition to God, is aſcribed to him, as done after his Example, and under his Banner. Since his Fall, the World is in a manner divided between God and him; whatſoever is good and excellent proceeds from God, and is done

done by his Influence, Command, Direction, and Perſwaſion: Whatſoever is bad and repugnant to the Laws of God is done by the example of the Devil, by imitating him, following his Conduct, and entring into his Government. For thus, all Beings diſobedient to God, may be ſaid to conſtitute one Society, whereof the Devil is the Head. And becauſe this Society buſie themſelves wholly in the things of this World, and are deluded by groſs Pleaſures; he is called *the Prince of this World*, and *the Prince of the Air*; not that he hath, or ever had, the diſpoſition of things here below, the diſpoſal of Kingdoms, or diſtribution of temporal conveniencies or inconveniencies; which hath been the miſtake of ſome. Such Power never belonged to him. He told our Saviour indeed in tempting of him, that *all the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of them were his*; and that *he would give them to him, if he would fall down and Worſhip him.* But he was a *Liar from the Beginning*; it was more than he could perform. Vol. 2.

The Devil is ſaid properly to tempt Men, by acting immediately upon their Souls, by ſuggeſting wicked thoughts unto them, by inſtigating them to Wickedneſs

neſs and Diſobedience: And this is that temptation, by which we ſo much ſuffer, which we ſo much fear, and by which he executes his Malice and Hatred upon Mankind. There are but two poſſible ways by which this can eaſily be ſuppoſed to be performed, ſince an extraordinary Derivation of Power from God is rejected.

The firſt is, by moving the imaginations of Men, and producing whatſoever Thoughts and Ideas he thinks fit, by moving their Animal Spirits, which in Man have ſo near a Connexion with the thoughts of the Soul, that ſuch motions in them will infallibly and unavoidably produce ſuch thoughts in the Soul. Now it is not impoſſible to conceive, that the Devils, as they are moſt ſagacious Spirits, and of long experience, may have obſerved and found, to which motions of the Spirits ſuch and ſuch thoughts of the Soul are annexed, and accordingly procure thoſe motions, as often as they deſire to introduce ſuch thoughts. For it is highly probable, that all immaterial Beings have a natural power of moving matter. We find that in our own Soul, which is the loweſt of all ſuch Beings, that moveth our Spirits, and by the aſ-

ſiſtance

assistance of those our whole Body: It Vol. 2.
no sooner formeth an Idea, but the Spi-
rits attend the Formation of it, and are moved according to its Diversity. There is no more necessary Connexion between the Thoughts of the Soul and the Motions of the Body, than between the latter, and the Thoughts of any other immaterial Being. So that the Devil may well be supposed to be able to make impressions on our Imagination, by the Motion of these Spirits. Yet it will not follow from hence, that he is able to move or disorder our whole Bodies; since to the former is required the consent of our Will, which is in our own Power, and doth not necessarily follow any Motion of the Spirits: To the latter is required a Power transcending the ordinary Laws of Nature, whereby the Causes and Effects of Health and Strength are settled and preserved, which are not in the least violated by such Motions in the Brain, as produce a bare Idea or naked Conception of any thing.

This way of impressing Thoughts in our Mind is possible: But it is more probable that all immaterial Beings can communicate Thoughts, and make impressions on each other. Without this it car-

Vol. 2. not be imagined how a Society of Angels or Devils can conſiſt; and yet that there are a Society of each, the Scripture aſſures us. If one Man cannot immediately impreſs a Thought in the Soul of another; it is no wonder. We are here inchained in a Body, in which ſtate no approaches can be made to us but by the Organs of the Body. Nature hath provided another way for Men to communicate their Thoughts, which when it ſhall ceaſe by putting off the Body, we have juſt ground to believe, that we ſhall obtain that Priviledge common to other imaterial Beings, of communicating our Thoughts to each other by immediate influence. At leaſt it is moſt certain, that Angels and Devils have that Priviledge, becauſe they have formed Societies, which they could not have done without it. And if they can impreſs any Thoughts upon each other, that is, upon Beings of equal Dignity; they are ſurely much more able to do it upon thoſe of an inferiour Rank and Capacity; ſuch as are the Souls of Men.

Both theſe ways are poſſible; but that the Devils do tempt us by either of theſe Methods, I dare not determine. It is ſufficient to ſhew that what we believe concerning

cerning the Temptation of evil Spirits, is poſſible and agreeable to Reaſon. And this I have ſpoken to you as Perſons deſiring ſatisfaction in the Truth of this Article of Chriſtianity; I will now return and ſpeak to you as Chriſtians firmly perſwaded of this Truth, that the Devils do tempt us. Vol. 2.

From what hath been ſaid, you may take a juſt Eſtimate of the efficacy of the Devil's Temptations, and our Ability to reſiſt him. He can proceed indeed no farther than to ſuggeſt the firſt Cogitations of any Object; and if Man alſo ſtopped here, he would never forfeit his Innocence, the Devil would never obtain his deſired End. He can do no more indeed, yet this he improves to great advantage, and with that ſucceſs which we all lament. He knoweth the Conſtitutions of all Men, and can cunningly ſuggeſt thoſe Sins unto them, to which they are moſt prone. He is unwearied in his Nature as well as Malice, and ſo can continually renew his Suggeſtions. He can improve them with the introducing of all thoſe falſe Arguments, which can recommend any Sin. He can propoſe the Pleaſures of the World under the moſt ſpecious appearance; is not diſcouraged by any repulſe;

Vol. 2. renews his Sollicitations with the moſt conſtant Diligence. If Man conſiders, what Pleaſures the World can give him; he amplifieth to him the Greatneſs of them. If the Commands of God be reflected on; he ſuggeſteth their Difficulty. If paſt Sins be recalled to Mind; he exaggerates their Enormity, and ſuggeſts them to be Unpardonable. If good Chriſtians through long ſtrugling and Conſtancy baffle him in all theſe Attempts, by ſtifling his wicked Impreſſions in their firſt riſe, by withholding their aſſent, and refuſing to embrace his Motions; he employeth other Methods, and excites wicked Men, who ſeldom reſiſt his Suggeſtions, becauſe always recommended with the apparent ſhew of Profit or Pleaſure, or ſome other Advantage, to aſſiſt him in his Deſign, by bad Examples, or Counſels; and if theſe be not ſufficient, by Injuries and Perſecutions; which was the very caſe St. *Peter* particularly ſpeaks of in this place. Thus we ſee, what a vigilant and powerful Adverſary we have to encounter; the Conviction of which will oblige us to reflect ſeriouſly upon our ability and means of reſiſting him; to enquire the moſt ſecure Methods of oppoſing

posing him, and seriously apply our Vol. 2.
selves to the Acquisition and Successful use of them. This I proposed in the second place to treat of; which, God willing, shall be the Subject of another Discourse.

The Seventh SERMON.

PART II.

Preach'd on the 29th. of *September*, 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

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1 Pet. V. 8, 9.

Your Adverſary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about, ſeeking whom he may devour.
Whom reſiſt ſtedfaſt in the Faith.—

HAVING repreſented to you in my former Diſcourſe upon theſe words, the powerful and conſtant Oppoſition made to Mankind, in the Proſecution of their Duty, by the Temptations of evil Spirits; it is but neceſſary to lay open the Means of reſiſtance, which are afforded to Men againſt theſe violent and continual

continual Aſſaults; leſt the Conſideration of that Vigour, and for the moſt part Succeſs, wherewith the Devil carrieth on his Aſſaults ſhould diſcourage you from a reſolute reſiſtance. Vol. 2.

What in other Combats is wont to encourage Men, may be reduced either to the Concern of ſome great Intereſt, as Life and Liberty, lying then at ſtake, to be recovered or even improved by Victory, and forfeited by a defeat; or to the apparent Hopes of Succeſs. Theſe Arguments we find by daily Experience want not their Effect to move Men to venture their Lives and Fortunes; even ſingly and without the Conjunction of each other. The fear of the Loſs of all worldly Happineſs will induce Men to fight, even when there is little probability of Succeſs; and the aſſured Hopes of Succeſs will produce the ſame Effect, altho' no great Intereſt be decided by it.

It may be wondred indeed, that what is ſo ordinary in temporal Matters ſhould ſeldom be diſcovered in ſpiritual Concerns, where both theſe Motives are always joyned together, and yet both ſeldom obtain their Effect. Hear a far greater Intereſt lieth at ſtake, than is ever the occaſion of temporal Quarrels: Here

Vol. 2. greater certainty of Succeſs appears; ſince here to obtain a Victory depends not upon the Faithfulneſs of Allies, the Courage of other Men, or the lucky Accidents of Fortune, but upon the ſingle Power of every private Man, for which every one can become anſwerable. If after all this, the reſiſtance made by Men to the Aſſaults of evil Spirits be feeble and oft-times unſucceſsful, we muſt aſcribe it not to the want of Evidence in theſe Arguments, or Conviction of it in the minds of Men, but to want of Conſideration; that Men blindly purſue the Objects of Senſe, raiſe not their Souls from the Earth, and ſeldom enter into the Conſideration of their ſpiritual Intereſts; enquire not what oppoſition they are like to meet with in the Proſecution of them, or what Abilities are conferred on them, whereby they may defeat this Oppoſition.

Men indeed are always ready to aſcribe this want of Succeſs to any thing elſe rather than their own default, and ſo they may excuſe themſelves, care not either to vilifie the Divine Juſtice, or depreſs their own Natures. Thus the Marcionites, and other Hereticks of old pretended that the Devil was an Almighty Being, whoſe Will

Will could not be reſiſted. And which is much to the ſame Purpoſe in relation to Man, ſome others fear not to maintain, that God giveth not ſufficient Grace to all, whereby he may be reſiſted with Succeſs. If things were ſo, in vain would Men endeavour to reſiſt him; nay, it would be even irrational to undertake a reſiſtance, which we were before aſſured would be unſucceſsful. We ſhould then have no more to do than to reſign up our Wills to the ſuggeſtion of thoſe evil Spirits, and ſubmit our ſelves quietly to that Tyranny, which we foreſaw could never be ſhaken off. But far form adviſing this Submiſſion, St. *Peter* exhorts us *to reſiſt ſtedfaſt in the faith*, that is, with aſſured Hopes of Succeſs and Deliverance; and that, after he had deſcribed the fierceneſs and violence of the Aſſaults made upon us by our Adverſary the Devil, by comparing him to *a roaring Lion*; and amplified the dreadful Execution which he performs upon conquered Men, by ſaying that he doth *devour* them: Notwithſtanding all this, he exhorts us to reſiſtance, and in reſiſting him aſſureth us of Succeſs. Vol. 2.

In purſuing the Deſign and improving the Exhortation of the Apoſtle, I will conſider

Vol. 2. conſider the Means of reſiſting the Devil, which are poſſible to Men; and theſe are either Internal; the reſult of their own natural Power or Faculties of their Soul; or External; the ſupernatural, yet ordinary Gift of God. Of theſe in their Order.

Firſt then, Man is enabled to reſiſt the Temptations of the Devil by his own natural Power; and by the due Exerciſe of the internal Faculties of his Soul. To underſtand this fully, it will be neceſſary to take a View of the methods whereby evil Spirits obtain their influence upon the Minds of Men and effect their Temptations. This I treated largely of in my former Diſcourſe, and ſhall only repeat the Summ of it unto you. The Devil then operates herein as a natural Agent only, whoſe Nature being finite, his Operations muſt be of a limited Power alſo. He cannot violently over-rule the Minds of Men, nor forcibly reſtrain the Exerciſe of their Free-wills. For this were to change the Nature of Man; whereas himſelf as well as all other Creatures cannot exceed the ordinary Laws of Nature fixed by the great Author of it in the firſt Creation of the World. That therefore Men by

by their Natural Power may reſiſt and ſurmount his Temptations, eſpecially ſince they are not enforced by an extraordinary Aſſiſtance of God; who as he giveth no Commiſſion to the Devil to tempt Men, ſo neither doth he give him any Aſſiſtance in the tempting of them. That only natural Means therefore remain unto him; and that this natural Means can be no other than by working upon the Imaginations of Men; that this he effects by imprinting Ideas and Conceptions of ſeveral Objects therein, either by producing ſuch Motions in the Brain, which create ſuch Conceptions in the Soul; or by immediately Communicating ſuch Conceptions to it; or perhaps by ſome other unknown way; but whatſoever the manner of his Operation may be, that the effect is and can be no other than the Production of bare Ideas or firſt Cogitations in the mind of Man. For as for his tempting one Man by the Sollicitation or Perſecution of another, that muſt be reduced to the ſame Original; ſince he could induce one Man to tempt another no otherwiſe than by tempting that firſt Man in a proper and ſtrict Senſe. Vol. 2.

From this ſhort view of the manner of

Vol. 2. of the Devils effecting his Temptations, and the Power which attends them, we may eaſily conceive our own Abilities to reſiſt them. For the ſame Power which we have either to approve or reject the firſt Thoughts of any Object ariſing in our Minds, the ſame Power we have to repel the Inſinuations of evil Spirits; ſince theſe extend no farther, without our own Concurrence. The firſt Thoughts of the Mind are the bare Conception of any Objects, before any Judgment be formed of them, or the Will be yet inclined on either ſide in relation to them. As if the Mind ſhould conceive the material Act of any ſin, and even with all the Circumſtances of it, and run over all the apparent Advantages which may ariſe from the Reception of it, and yet hath not determined whether it ſhall admit or reject it. Such a bare Conception precedes every Operation of the Will. The Imagination or Underſtanding firſt repreſents the Object to the Will, and then the Will formeth a Judgment of it; either conſenting to, or diſapproving the thing propoſed. The latter, the uſe of the Will, is always in our Power, and cannot be forced by any Power whether of Men or Devils; nay,

nay, with Reverence be it ſpoken, cannot be over-ruled by God himſelf. For the meaſure of his Power is his Will; and this cannot be ſuppoſed to alter the Nature of things which himſelf hath fixed; and if he ſhould by an extraordinary Act of Power conſtrain the Will of Man, the Operation would be neither good nor bad, becauſe not free, and ſo capable neither of Reward nor Puniſhment. So that Man is ſecure on this ſide, his Will always remains untouched; the only Approaches, which can be made to him, are by his Imagination or Faculty of Conception. And this is not always in his Power. Evil Spirits may impreſs Ideas in it without his own Concurrence; the Preſence of Objects will naturally produce them, and the ſecret workings of Memory will recal them. In all this the Will is not concerned; ſuch Thoughts will enter into the Soul not only without the Conſent, but even againſt the Deſire of Man. He cannot avoid the Conception of thoſe Objects, which are preſented to him either by evil Spirits, or external Objects, or the Suggeſtion of his own Memory.

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But then as Man cannot avoid them, ſo neither is he to anſwer for them, no more than when he hears the Relation of

Vol. 2. a Sin committed by another, or ſeeth it with his own Eyes; in which Caſe he cannot avoid the Conception of it, and yet is not rendred Guilty thereby. Which ſufficiently confutes the Opinion of ſome Men, who maintain theſe firſt Cogitations to be in our own Power; and that as ſuch we are anſwerable for them. For whether the Conception be imprinted in the Mind by the Suggeſtion of evil Spirits, or by the Fruitfulneſs of our own Invention, it is of the ſame Nature, and hath no more neceſſary Effect, than that which is produced by the Report of the Senſes, whether ſeeing or hearing. In which laſt Caſes it cannot be denied, that a Conception of the matter related or ſeen cannot be prevented. The Soul is ſo quick a Being, that no ſooner doth the Object ſtrike the Organ of ſenſe, but it frameth an Idea of it. If then in ſuch obvious Caſes the firſt Thoughts of the Soul may be abſolutely involuntary; if the Mind cannot prevent the groſs Operations of Senſe, much leſs will it be able to exclude the more ſubtle Impreſſions of ſpiritual Beings, ſuch as are the Temptations of Devils, or the inward Suggeſtions of Imagination. But then, as I ſaid before, Man is not accountable for theſe, becauſe not within his Power.

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A Man indeed may turn away his Eyes from beholding Sin; he may ſtop his Ears when he heareth pleaſing Relations of Sin; he may for the moſt part ſtifle theſe Suggeſtions, whether of evil Spirits, or a depraved Imagination; he may expel them from his Mind, and permit them not to Lodge themſelves within his Breaſt. This was the Practice of our bleſſed Saviour, whoſe Example ſhould be our conſtant Pattern. He had framed ſuch a clear Conviction of his Duty and firm Reſolution of performing it, that in him to maſter any Temptation was no more than to diſcover, that it was contrary to the Commands of God and his own Duty. No ſooner did the Devil ſuggeſt to him the miraculous Converſion of *Stones into bread* for the ſatisfying of his Hunger, but he rejected the Propoſal, becauſe contrary to a due Reliance upon the Divine Promiſes of Protection. When he would have perſwaded him to work an unneceſſary Miracle in throwing himſelf off the Pinacle of the Temple, he immediately remembred that God had forbidden Men *to tempt* his Providence, and the remembrance of that Prohibition was a ſufficient Safeguard againſt the

Vol. 2. the Suggeſtion of the Devil. When he tempted our Lord to *fall down and worſhip himſelf*, by promiſing him in Reward *the Kingdoms of the earth and all the glory of them*, he oppoſed to this the Divine Command of *worſhipping God alone*; and did not ſo much as enter into debate whether he ſhould admit the Propoſal, but with a generous Diſdain immediately rejected all Thoughts of it with a *Get thee behind me Satan.* His Reſolutions of Obedience to God alone, were as quick as hisConceptions of what was propoſed to him by the ſubtle Tempter,and that becauſe he had firmly rooted this Principle in his Mind, that whatſoever was his Duty he would perform; whatſoever was unlawful,he would reject.

If we by aſſiduous Meditation would take care to fix the ſame Principle in our Minds; if we would diligently recal it to mind, as often as any Object of choice were preſented to us; if the ſame pious Indignation would ſeize us, as often as any thing were propoſed to us, Derogatory to the Honour of God and our own real Intereſt; it would be no leſs eaſie for us to overcome the Temptations of the Devil, than it was for our Lord and Maſter. The manner of Temptation in each

each Caſe was not different; being in each Caſe effected by inward Suggeſtion. For we muſt not ſuppoſe that the Devil viſibly appeared to our Lord and ſpake to him face to face; to have propoſed his alluring Temptations without any diſguiſe would more have prejudiced the Efficacy of them, than all the ſpecious Arguments wherewith he recommended them, could have enforced them. He tempted Chriſt by inſinuating ſecretly into his mind ſuch Thoughts as theſe, that ſince he was Conſcious to himſelf of his Power of working Miracles, he had better ſatisfie his Hunger by turning the Stones into Bread, than endure it any longer in awaiting the ordinary Providence of God; that to leap off the Pinacle of the Temple, and to be ſeen to be carried ſafe in the Air, would contribute very much to raiſe his Glory and Fame among Men; and that if he would employ that Power of Miracles, which he had received from God for the Converſion of the World, to the Conqueſt of it; it would be no hard Matter in a ſhort time to gain *all the Kingdoms of the Earth and the Glory of them.* Vol. 2.

Thus the Devil tempted our Lord, and thus he continueth to tempt us; with this

Vol. 2. only different, that our Lord by his excellent Wiſdom knew that all thoſe Suggeſtions proceeded from that wicked Spirit; and we when we are tempted by him are wont to aſcribe thoſe evil Motions, which we then find within our ſelves, to any thing rather than the Suggeſtion of evil Spirits. For ſince theſe Suggeſtions are uſually ſpecious Arguments of the extraordinary Pleaſure or Profit to be found in ſin, Men are apt to aſcribe all this to the Excellency of their Underſtanding, which, as they imagine, raiſeth them beyond the trifling ſuperſtition of religious Fools; who are content to forfeit the chief Satisfactions of this Life, for fear of offending they know not whom, and ſuffering they know not what; or to their own extraordinary Sagacity whereby they alone can diſcern what is the true Happineſs of Man; or perhaps reconcile all theſe ſins wherein they delight, to their Pretences of future Happineſs. When indeed pious Men know, no leſs than they, what are the ſpecious Arguments recommending ſinful Pleaſures, and by what Methods they may be beſt enhanced; but they will not entertain themſelves with ſuch Conſiderations, and if ſuggeſted to them, preſently

preſently do remove them; not only be- Vol. 2.
cauſe by Attention to them, they are en-
dangered to be allured or betrayed to Conſent to them; but alſo becauſe voluntarily to continue ſuch thoughts in the mind and dwell upon them, is a ſin; ſince this includes a Connivance of the Will, not reſtraining the Imagination from ſuch impure Ideas; and is commonly attended with a ſort of Complacency; which wanteth nothing but a fit occaſion to put the pleaſing ſin in Practice.

So then the moſt ſecure method of eluding the Temptations of the Devil, is to decline his Suggeſtions immediately, to remove even the firſt Thoughts of them, and divert the Soul to ſome lawful Object. But becauſe the imagination of Man may be ſo ſtrongly excited by ſome violent Object or Impreſſion; that it ſhall not be even in the Power of the Soul to ſuppreſs it for ſome conſiderable time; as we ſee in violent Paſſions, which can no more be allayed by one Act of Diſſent in the Will, than a tempeſtuous Sea be calmed in one minute; therefore it will be neceſſary to provide Remedies againſt ſuch Adventures. And the moſt effectual is that preſcribed by our Saviour, Matth. V. 29. 30. *If thy right*

Vol. 2. *Eye offend thee, pluck it out, and caſt it from thee: And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and caſt it from thee*, &c. That is, if by the Enjoyment of any otherwiſe indifferent Object, thou find thy ſelf often betrayed to an unlawful uſe of it, or to any other ſin, deprive thy ſelf even of that lawful Pleaſure, rather than for the ſake of that expoſe thy Soul to the Danger of total Deſtruction; and thereby forfeit, not only that apparent, but even, all real Satisfactions. If by any pleaſing Objects of ſight, thou art apt to be tempted to unlawful Deſires; by a prudent Caution debar thy ſelf even of thoſe otherwiſe lawful Pleaſures, which thou mighteſt receive from that noble Faculty. If grateful Objects of touch do often excite ſuch vehement Paſſions in thee, as cannot be ſatisfied without the Commiſſion of ſin; renounce even all lawful Pleaſures, which thou mighteſt receive from thence. If thou canſt not look upon a Woman without luſting after her, ſuffer not thy Eyes to gaze upon her. If thou canſt not engage in Company, without being tempted to Drunkenneſs, deny thy ſelf ſo dangerous a Satisfaction; and ſo in all other Caſes. A moſt Divine Counſel, and excellently fitted to defeat

defeat the Temptations of the Devil, or the Propenſity of our own Nature to ſin. Vol. 2.

Every Man may diſcover in himſelf a Proneneſs to ſome particular ſin beyond others; of which evil Spirits make their advantage, and moſt frequently aſſault Men by inciting them to the Commiſſion of it. Here a Man ſhould be chiefly careful, and rather than ſuffer himſelf to be led into it, dread even the Approaches of it, ſuſpect even his lawful Enjoyments of that Object, to which the ſin relates; and if all this Circumſpection prevents not the returns of his unlawful Paſſions, as oft as the Object is renewed, to renounce even all lawful uſe of it; at leaſt until thoſe Paſſions can be ſo far allayed, that the Soul can again entertain the Object without any Danger of ſin.

But the moſt frequent Caſe remaineth yet to be provided for; that is, when the Idea produced by the Object, or by the ſuggeſtion of the Devil, is ſo violent, that it cannot be removed by a ſingle Diſſent of the Will; and notwithſtanding all the forementioned rules of Caution, is, either by our own Negligence, or by the ſubtilty of our Adverſary, or both, actually produced. Here it is that the Efficacy of Temptations chiefly appears;

Vol. 2. the Devil is vigilant and unwearied in the profecution of his Deſigns, attacks us on all ſides ſucceſſively; if he be repulſed at one Poſt he aſſaults us at another, and never gives over till he gaineth entrance. Here is the chief Conflict of a Chriſtian; when the Suggeſtion of evil Spirits exciteth his Imagination; when his Paſſions are raiſed by this Conception; when his ſenſual Appetite grows impetuous, oppoſeth the Directions of Reaſon, and requireth blindly to be ſatisfied. The repugnancy of this to the rational Faculties of the Soul giveth the Devil opportunity to aſſault us, and ſucceſs in it. This proceeds no farther than the bare ſatisfaction of Senſe, it lyeth grovelling on the Earth, looks not up to Heaven, nor diſcerns any future Hopes; therein common with Beaſts, who purſue the Enjoyment of preſent Objects without any regard to Futurity. This continually inciteth a Man to enjoy the Object, which is ſet before him, without enquiring whether it be allowed or forbidden by God; conſiders no further than whether it be grateful and acceptable to the Senſe; becomes clamorous if denied; and can never be wholly rooted out, while we carry this Body about with us, whoſe

whoſe Wants and natural Motions are the Spring of it. Vol. 2.

It is indeed abſolutely ſubject to the command of the rational Faculty, if this exerts its ſelf vigorouſly, and maintains a conſtant Guard; but if it grows remiſs, if thoſe natural Motions, either by Negligence, or the Impreſſion of evil Spirits, be raiſed into ſtrong Paſſions, the Danger is evident; *Sin lieth at the doors*, and if not repelled by a vigorous Oppoſition, will force its entrance.

This conſtant Rebellion of the ſenſual Appetite againſt the Reaſon of Man, is that unhappineſs, which St. *Paul* ſo much complains of, Rom. VII. *I ſee another law in my members warring againſt the law of my mind, and bringing me into Captivity to the law of ſin*, &c. This alone is a conſtant Temptation to Mankind; but *then* moſt dangerous, when excited and fomented by the impreſſion of evil Spirits which imprint in the Imagination all thoſe Arguments, which can enforce the Deſires of the ſenſual Appetite, and render them plauſible.

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Vol. 2. performance of our Duty, to the reſtrainment of our Luſts, to the continuance of our Obedience. If by an aſſiduous Entertainment of theſe Arguments in our Thoughts, they become familiar, and as it were habitual to us; no ſooner ſhall we be prompted to ſin by the Inſurrection of our carnal Appetites, or the Solicitation of infernal Spirits, but the contrary Arguments will preſent themſelves, oppoſe and defeat the other. If it be ſuggeſted to us, that this ſin includeth ſome conſiderable Pleaſure; the mind on the other ſide will remember, that God ſent us not into the World to take our Pleaſure, as we ſhould think moſt convenient; but to perform thoſe immutable Rules of Juſtice and Sobriety which he hath preſcribed; and for the ſakes of which he beſtowed Exiſtence on us; that this propoſed Pleaſure is indeed mean and trifling, depriving us of a far greater Pleaſure, and drawing eternal Miſery upon us. If the Body or Imagination now affected urgeth vehemently for the Grant of their Deſires; the Soul will conſider, that it is better to deny an unneceſſary Gratification to it, than to deſtroy both Soul and Body by a fooliſh Compliance with it. If Secrecy and Security

cunity in the Commiſſion of this ſin be ſuggeſted; Reaſon will oppoſe the all-ſeeing Eye of God, will dread his Majeſty and fear his Anger. If the ſmallneſs of the ſin be pleaded; a knowing Soul will preſently call to mind that every wilful Sin is mortal, and an open Rebellion againſt God. If the uncertainty of future Rewards and Puniſhments be objected; Reaſon ſilenceth the Objection and appeals to the Evidence of thoſe Arguments from whence by frequent Meditation it hath received a thorough Conviction. And thus in all other Arguments of ſin, ſuggeſted either by the ſenſual Appetite, or the Temptation of the Devil, if the Soul be prepared with an exact and ready Comprehenſion of all the Motives of Obedience; if it hath fully weighed them, thoroughly digeſted them, and firmly retains them; it cannot want the propoſed end, the defeat of Temptations, continuance of Innocence, and increaſe of Piety. Vol. 2.

To prepare the mind with ſuch Conſiderations will indeed ſucceſsfully baffle the Aſſaults of our ſpiritual Enemy; and to employ it continually in ſuch would wholly prevent his Attempt. But becauſe ſuch continual Attention to ſpiritual Medi-

Vol. 2. Meditations is, I will not ſay rare, but impracticable in this imperfect State of Life; inſtead of that, Men ſhould endeavour to employ their Souls continually with ſome certain Thoughts, which if not Pious, yet at leaſt may be innocent. It is a no leſs true than common Maxim, That *Idleneſs lays men open to the ſnare of the Devil.* The reaſonableneſs of which Poſition, plainly appears from what I have already laid down, concerning the manner of the Devils Operation in his Temptation. For this Being, by imprinting the firſt Thoughts of any Object in the minds of Men, he hath no where ſo eaſie an entrance, as where the Soul lies open on all ſides, uncultivated, unemployed. In ſuch a ſtate, the mind of Man is capable of any Impreſſions, and ready to receive them, and when it hath received them, will ſcarce make any other than a feeble Oppoſition to the plauſible Inſinuations of evil Spirits. And for this Reaſon, I ſuppoſe, the Habitation of the Devil is ſo often in Scripture ſaid to be more particularly in the Wilderneſs and in Deſart Places, where Men for want of Buſineſs or innocent Society, wherewith to entertain the Faculties of the Soul, lay open to his Aſſaults.

faults. Whereas if the mind buſieth it Vol. 2.
ſelf continually either in pious Meditations, lawful Concerns of the Body, Knowledge and Proſecution of uſeful Arts and Sciences, in a chaſt Society, or innocent Recreations; the Imagination being prepoſſeſſed with the Conception of thoſe Objects, wherein the mind is employed, leaves no room for the Suggeſtions of the Devil, and happily precludes them.

Man is a thinking Being, enjoying an active and immaterial Soul; which as ſuch, muſt neceſſarily be always employed in ſome Cogitation or other. If then Men will take no care to direct and regulate their Thoughts at all times, the infallible effect will be, that they muſt blindly follow, either the fortuitous Conceptions of a roving Imagination, or the impreſſions of external Objects, or the ſecret Inſinuations of ſubtile and wicked Spirits. In this Condition Man inconſiderately follows that Idea which firſt ſtrikes him; and then no wonder the Devil makes uſe of this favourable opportunity to take Poſſeſſion of his Imagination, and turn it to his own Deſtruction.

Having

Vol. 2. Having thus repreſented to you the principal and moſt effectual Methods of reſiſting our grand Adverſary the Devil, ariſing from our own natural Power and Faculties; I proceed to conſider the external Aſſiſtances, whereby Man is enabled to carry on the ſame Deſign with Succeſs; and theſe are chiefly two, the Grace of God, and the Aſſiſtance of good Spirits. And of theſe briefly in their Order.

The Grace of God and the Inſpirations of his Holy Spirit, are never wanting to faithful Chriſtians in this ſpiritual Combat. He hath engaged that *he will never ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation alſo make a way for us to eſcape.* And this Promiſe he obſerves inviolably; by enlightening our minds, by directing our Thoughts, by influencing our Wills. Not that all the aforementioned Faculties of the Soul of Man, and Abilities of reſiſting the Temptations of evil Spirits, are leſs owing to him, than theſe more extraordinary Emanations; both equally proceed from his Gift, both are to be aſcribed to his Liberality. But the former are the natural Faculties of Man, which cannot be wanting to him while he is Man; which depend not upon

on the good or bad uſe of them, and are never withdrawn from us, nor denied to us. The latter are the ſupernatural Gift of God, which Man cannot claim in right of his Nature, are conferred only to the worthy receiver; and are withdrawn upon the abuſe or neglect of them. Vol. 2.

It is no hard matter to conceive, how God herein influenceth the Soul of Man, after it hath been ſhewed, that even finite Spirits can effect it. If they could by long Experience find out what Cogitations of the mind were annexed to ſuch Motions in the Brain; He ſurely, who did at firſt unite them, cannot be ignorant of them. If evil Spirits, by the Priviledge of immaterial Beings, can communicate Thoughts to the Soul of Man by immediate influence; He certainly who is the ſupreme Lord of all, can do much more. He may proceed in other Methods, *nothing being impoſſible to him*, nor himſelf ſubject to the Laws of Nature. However this we muſt aſſuredly believe, that God changeth not the Order of Nature herein, in violently with-holding our Wills from Conſenting to the Sollicitations of the Devil. He deals with us as with rational Beings,

pointeth

Vol. 2. pointeth out the right way to us, perſwadeth us to enter into it, fixeth Rewards at the end of it, moveth us gently by his Holy Spirit to embrace it: But after all, will not forcibly carry us into it. And thus he deals with us when tempted by the Devil, he giveth us ſufficient ſtrength to withſtand him, enlightens our Souls with a full Proſpect of thoſe Arguments which may withdraw the Will from his Sollicitations; but after all leaves it at Liberty, and awaits the iſſue. Not that this extraordinary Aſſiſtance is given to all, who are tempted of the Devil; but that it is denied to none, who rightly ſeek it. He withdraws his Grace, if it be not earneſtly deſired, if it be not thankfully received, if it be not ſoberly uſed, if it be not rightly improved; as he formerly delivered up the Rebellious Iſraelites *to their own hearts luſts, and to follow their own Imaginations*; and as ſtill by the ſolemn Cenſures of the Church, when rightly applied, wicked *Chriſtians are delivered up to Satan, to be led captive by him at his Will.*

Another method, whereby God aſſiſteth Mankind extraordinarily againſt the Temptations of the Devil, is by reſtraining his force and limiting his Malice.

The

The Devil cannot perform any Act of Temptation without the ordinary permiſſion of God; and oft-times he is extraordinarily reſtrained by his Almighty Power from tempting faithful Men beyond the proportion of their Ability to endure. God putteth a Hook in the Noſe of this *Leviathan*, and fixeth his bounds unto him, *how far he ſhall paſs and no farther*; as in the Caſe of *Job*, where he determined, how far his Power of Temptation ſhould extend, and forbad him to proceed any farther than to ſuch a Degree. And this is one of the general and moſt conſpicuous Benefits of Chriſtianity, that by the Reception and publick Profeſſion of it, the Devil, *that old Dragon* in the Revelations, is chained up, his Power abridged, his Malice weakned.

Before the Promulgation of the Chriſtian Religion, he had procured to himſelf an univerſal Worſhip in the World; except in the ſmall ſpot of *Judea*, erected Oracles, and daily effected lying wonders. Men were from their Infancy trained up in his Service, and to be ſubject to him was the Unhappineſs of their Education. If any oppoſed his Worſhip, he was preſently decried as an Atheiſt, as an introducer of new Religions obnoxious to ſevere

Vol. 2. ſevere Puniſhments by the Laws of the Empire; if Men entertained a Suſpicion of that irrational Worſhip which he had formed; he could amuſe the Minds of his followers by ſeeming Miracles, Fright them into his Obedience by Prodigies, keep up the Reputation of Divinity by Sorceries and Predictions. All this was then permitted to him, till the glorious Light of the Goſpel appeared; his Power then ſenſibly decreaſed, until the open Exerciſe of it was wholly determined, by the publick Profeſſion of Chriſtianity in the World. He was then remanded to the bottomleſs Pit, ceaſed to be the *Prince of the Air*, deprived of the Power of working apparent Miracles, at leaſt in Chriſtian Countries; confined to ſecret and dark Operations only; and even thoſe in great meaſure enervated and defeated by that ordinary Grace, which is beſtowed on all Chriſtians in the publick Sacraments and Offices of the Church.

It remains that I add ſomewhat of the Aſſiſtance given to us by good Spirits againſt the Temptations of evil Spirits; of which the Solemnity of this day doth particularly require a grateful Acknowledgment; which was piouſly inſtituted by the Church in Commemoration

tion of those many and eminent Benefits, which we receive from the Holy Angels. Among these none of the least is what we now treat of, their assisting us in resisting the Temptations of evil Spirits. For being *ministring Spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be Heirs for Salvation*, as it is *Heb.* I. 14. they apply themselves with unwearied Diligence to this Charitable Office: attending the Motions of our Minds, insinuating good Counsels, countermining the Stratagems of the Devil, enlightning the Mind, moving the Affections, promoting the good of the Soul. Vol. 2.

How all this is performed by them, we may easily conceive, after a clear Comprehension of the method whereby evil Spirits operate in our Souls. For whatsoever natural Power these Possess, equally belong to the Holy Angels, who partake of the same Nature, and differ only in the quality of good and bad. If they have the Power of moving Matter, and so of affecting our Imagination; much more these, who are the Messengers of God. If they can imprint Ideas in our Mind by immediate influence; much more these, whose pious Designs are blessed and prospered by their Almighty Pa-

Vol. 2. tron. If they by long Obſervation have found out the turnings and windings of the Heart of Man; theſe poſſeſs by Nature an equal knowledge, and have obtained a much greater by Divine Communication. If they have diſcovered the leſs defenſible places of the Soul of Man, where the Attempt may moſt ſucceſsfully be made; theſe have diſcerned the Arguments of Obedience, which are moſt perſwaſive to every ſingle Man, and fail not to apply them fitly. If they proſecute their hatred and wicked Deſigns againſt Mankind with unwearied Malice; theſe continue their good Offices with no leſs conſtant Diligence and Charity. If they be rendered vigorous and powerful in all their Actions by their Subtilty, Agility, long Experience and comprehenſive Knowledge; theſe obtain the ſame Faculties in equal Perfection, and with far greater Probability of Succeſs in the uſe of them; in as much as therein theſe act in Obedience to God, they in oppoſition to him; theſe with a conſtant Complacency and Proſpect of reward to be obtained by it; thoſe with a perpetual Vexation, as knowing the increaſe of their Puniſhment, doth attend it; theſe aſſiſted and directed by God, thoſe reſtrained and with-

with-holden by him. In ſhort, if the Devils bring great Detriment to the ſpiritual Intereſts of Mankind, the Angels bring no leſs advantage to it; that it may be queſtioned whether it were more eligible for Man to ſuffer the Temptation of evil, for the Aſſiſtance of good Spirits, or to want them both together. Only the ſame Caution, which we before obſerved to be neceſſary in procuring and continuing the Grace of God, is alſo required here; that we render our ſelves worthy of it by a diligent Concurrence; and that as we ſhould not by our Perverſeneſs *grieve the Holy Spirit of God*, ſo neither ſhould we by our Negligence and obſtinate Perſeverance in Sin grieve the Holy Angels. Vol. 2.

And this is the only Reward, which for all their Labour and Care beſtowed on us, they require of us; that together with them we pay a due Obedience to our common Maſter; that we defeat not their Charitable Deſigns by our own Wilfulneſs. Worſhip and other Signs of Divine Honour they affect not; nay this they will not receive from us. The end of their Labour is to procure Happineſs to Man, and the Reward of it, next to the Conſcience of having obeyed their

Vol. 2. great Maſter, is the ſatisfaction of their Succeſs in it. Their only aim is that we would joyn with them here in paying intire Obedience to our common Creator; that ſo we may joyn with them hereafter in ſinging Praiſes to him.

To him therefore be aſcribed the Glory and Thanks of all their Charitable Operations in relation to Mankind; to him be rendred all Praiſe and Honour, who at firſt Created ſuch excellent Beings, and afterwards ſent them forth to Miniſter to our Salvation; who hath placed in us Souls not unlike to theſe noble Beings; and hath Promiſed, that if we be not wanting to our ſelves, he will in due time make us fully like unto them. *To him, with his Son and bleſſed Spirit, be aſcribed all Power, Might, Majeſty, Dominion and Adoration, henceforth and for evermore.*

The

The Eighth SERMON.

Preach'd on the 20th. of *October*, 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

St. Mark VIII. 36.

For what ſhall it profit a Man, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own Soul?

IT is the peculiar Character of the Chriſtian Religion, that it is adapted as well to the Intereſt as the reaſon of Mankind; that it is not only Conſentaneous to our Natures, but advantageous to our Perſons; that it not only preſcribes to us our Duty, but directs us in the way of Happineſs. Herein it infinitely ſurpaſſeth even all the more refined Syſtems of the Gentile Divinity and Philoſophy. They

 pretended

Vol. 2. pretended to no more than to refine our Reaſon, and enlighten our Underſtanding, by the Knowledge and conſideration of Truth. But then they could produce nothing, wherewith to ſatiate the unbounded Appetite of the Will, and create a real Happineſs. Many of them indeed aſſerted the immortality of the Soul; but neither hoped a Reſurrection of the Body, nor any reward of the Soul, beſide the Conſcience of a vertuous Life.

The Jewiſh Oeconomy indeed had a reward annexed to it, but ſuch as fell infinitely ſhort of the Deſires of Mankind, and the Capacity of rational Beings: as being wholly reſtrained to the Pleaſures of this Life, and appropriated to the more ignoble part of Man the Body. Whereas our Saviour, in this laſt Revelation of God communicated by him to the World, whereby the Happineſs of Mankind was fully to be compleated, and our Natures raiſed to the higheſt Perfection, hath conſulted not only the Reaſon, but the intereſt of Mankind.

He hath ſatisfied the firſt, by giving us a ſpiritual and rational Religion, not tied up to the *beggerly Elements* of the World,

World, nor wholly immerſed in Rites and Ceremonies; but agreeing to the Dictates of Nature, and firſt Principles of Reaſon. And then in the ſecond Place he hath advanced our Intereſt by propoſing to us an infinite and eternal Reward, far ſurpaſſing all the Pleaſures and Delights of this World. Vol. 2.

Our moſt Wiſe and ever Bleſſed Lawgiver knew very well, that the greateſt part of Men are more moved with Arguments of Profit, than with Conſiderations of Duty. The latter only affect our Underſtandings; but the firſt ſtrike our Senſes, and raviſh our Will.

He might as well by the right of Creation as Redemption have enjoyned to us all the Precepts of the Chriſtian Religion, without annexing any Reward to the performance of them. It had even then been our Duty to obey; and a ſufficient Happineſs by obeying to ſerve the great ends of our Creator. And therefore all the Patriarchs before *Abraham* ſerved God without any expreſs Promiſe of a Reward, much leſs a Reward of that Nature and Value, as is propoſed to us Chriſtians. They might indeed juſtly hope for the Favour of God; but then that Favour

Vol. 2. might consist only in providing them Food, and Rayment, and other common Benefits of humane Nature, and could not with any certainty be extended farther.

Since our Saviour therefore together with a most excellent Religion, hath delivered to us an assurance of eternal Happiness; and requireth our Obedience for no other end, than that we may thereby obtain this Reward: as we ought to admire and magnifie the infinite Goodness of God; so must we condemn our own extreme Folly if we neglect or contemn so great Happiness.

This is an Argument highly accommodated to the Understanding and Capacity of all Men, and therefore is very frequently urged by Christ, who beginneth his Sermon upon the *Mount* in the V. *Chap.* of St. *Matthew*, with affixing this Promise to the greater and more arduous Duties of the Christian Religion, that so the Difficulty of these might willingly be overseen by us upon the Prospect of the Greatness of our Reward. So *Matth.* XIII. 44. he compareth the Kingdom of Heaven *to a Treasure hid in a Field, the which when a Man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth*

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and ſelleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field: and in the following Verſes to a Merchant *ſelling all his* Eſtate *to buy one Pearl of great price.* By which Sale, and by the Joyfulneſs attending it, he intimates that all worldly Conſiderations are to be foregone, when they ſtand in Competition with the hopes of another Life. Vol. 2.

A Poſition which might juſtly be eſteemed a Paradox, if that infallible Mouth had not pronounced it; and Reaſon did not in ſome meaſure aſſure us of the Truth of it. But ſuch was both the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of our Saviour in preſcribing to us a rule of Life; that he choſe to make uſe of all the Arguments, wherewith either the Will or Underſtanding of Mankind could be incited, to engage us to the Obſervation of it; that ſo if the Duty we owe to God for the Benefits of Creation, Preſervation and Life, could not enforce us; if the wonderful Love of our Redeemer dying for us could not perſwade us; if Gratitude to both could not oblige us; if neither Reaſon nor Authority could prevail with us to endeavour the Perfection of our Nature, by Holineſs and Submiſſion to the Divine Will; and

Vol. 2. and thereby to ſerve the great Ends of our Creation: yet the Promiſe of an eternal Crown, and the Conſideration of ſo vaſt an Intereſt might enforce us to Obedience.

This obviates all the Objections even of worldly Men, who muſt needs Confeſs, that in vain do they Labour for the Attainment of Felicity in this Life, if it can never truly be found on this ſide Heaven. A thorough perſwaſion of the Truth of this would baniſh all ſinful Temptations, and extravagant Deſires of carnal Pleaſures. For Men would be the moſt deplorable and irrational of all Creatures, if they preferred a preſent trifle before a future Treaſure, and voluntarily quitted the Life of Angels, to retain thoſe Pleaſures which are common to Beaſts.

And not only doth this Truth hold in quitting the momentany Enjoyments of this Life, and ſuffering our ſelves to be deprived of them for an exchange of future Glory; but even in undergoing the greateſt Afflictions of this Life, and embracing Death it ſelf, upon the ſame Account. This our Saviour chiefly aims at in this place.

For

For when in the Foregoing Verſes he had foretold, that bearing the Croſs ſhould be inſeparable from the Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion; and that he who endeavoured to decline this Croſs, and ſave his Life by a denial of his Faith, ſhould thereby incur a much greater Puniſhment than is the loſs of this temporal Life, he ſubjoyns in the words of my Text, *For what ſhall it profit a Man, if he ſhall gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul?* Vol. 2.

As if he ſhould ſay. That Syſtem of Religion which I have inſtituted and recommended to you, is not intended to enlarge or ſatisfie the Pleaſures of the Body; but to increaſe the Dignity of the Soul, improve its Faculties, and procure to it a Happineſs commenſurate to the Vaſtneſs of its Deſire, and the Liberality of its Creator. Whoſoever therefore ſeriouſly intends to become my Diſciple, and partake of the Benefits of my Goſpel, muſt prepare himſelf with a firm Reſolution to quit all the Intereſts and Advantages of the World, embrace Afflictions, and not decline Death, whenſoever the Malice of wicked Men and the Obligation of my Commands ſhall require that Tryal and Teſtimony of his Obedience.

Vol. 2 Obedience. And in ſo doing he ſhall not only perform his Duty, but ſecure and promote his Intereſt. For thoſe, who ſhall baſely renounce their Allegiance to me, or violate my Commands, to ſave their own Lives, and avoid the Malice of their Enemies, ſhall after this Life undergo a much greater Loſs and Puniſhment, than that which they ſo Cowardly fear'd, and ungenerouſly declin'd.

On the other ſide, they who ſhall willingly lay down their Lives, and ſlight all the Terrors of Men and Devils, to preſerve their Obedience to me intire, and retain the Profeſſion of my Goſpel, ſhall be certainly Crowned with ſo great a Reward, that the loſs of this temporal Life will be inconſiderable, in reſpect of that eternal Life which is attained by it. This is your Intereſt as well as my Command; your Profit as well as Duty. For it is not only reaſonable that every Man ſhould quit that particular ſhare and Portion, which he hath in the Pleaſures and Poſſeſſions of this World, to ſecure thereby his Hopes of a future Happineſs; but even if all the Riches and Poſſeſſions of the World were heaped upon one ſingle Man, or could be

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all obtained by denial of my Religion or Violation of my Laws, yet would it not be a ſufficient Motive for ſo great a Crime. And he that ſhould prevaricate upon ſuch mean Conſiderations, would find in the end, when he caſts up his Account, that he hath gained nothing. Vol. 2.

To evince, illuſtrate and recommend to you this great Truth, is the Deſign of my preſent Diſcourſe. Which therefore I ſhall divide into theſe two Heads.

I. That the Intereſts of the Soul are infinitely greater and more conſiderable, than thoſe of the Body.

II. That this Intereſt is deſtroyed, and the Soul rendred miſerable by diſobedience to the Laws of God.

I. That the Intereſts of the Soul are infinitely greater and more conſiderable, than thoſe of the Body. And this appears, if we conſider either the Reaſon and Nature of things, or the Revelation and Commands of God. Under the firſt Head may be compriſed the Nature and Dignity of the Soul, and the Excellency of thoſe peculiar Perfections and Rewards which the Soul is capable of.

Firſt then, the Dignity and Precedence of the Soul, was ever acknowledged in

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Vol. 2. all Ages, by wiſe and learned Men of all Sects and Perſwaſions; nay even the more rude and illiterate parts of Mankind did ever firmly believe this, as an Opinion planted in them by the firſt Dictates of Nature, and ariſing from the firſt Principles of Reaſon.

That we have an immortal Soul, is a thing which ought to be ſuppoſed by all, who profeſs the leaſt ſhew of Religion; and cannot be denied without the total Deſtruction of it. All falſe Religions were invented by Men, and the true Religion propoſed by God, merely for the Improvement and direction of this noble Being. It is this only which diſtinguiſheth us from the Rank and Condition of Beaſts, which likens us to God, and makes us little inferiour to the Angels. It is this, whereby we contemplate the admirable and wonderful Perfections of God; underſtand the Wiſdom of his Government, and the Greatneſs of his Works. It is this alone whereby we form Habits of Vertue, and do any thing grateful to our Creator: whereby we receive the Inſtructions of God, and know his Will. And therefore *Prov.* XX. 27. the Spirit of Man is called *the candle of the Lord*: becauſe by that

that only we receive the Divine Illuminations, and are inſtructed in the way to Happineſs. This Dignity and Preference of the Soul beyond the Body might be at large demonſtrated from many other Conſiderations, but I will inſiſt only upon three, which are plain and obvious to the underſtanding of all Men. Vol. 2.

As firſt, by the Soul alone we receive the influence and benefits of God. Some Divine Benefits indeed belong alſo to the Body, as Creation and Preſervation, but thoſe are common to all other Creatures, and belong equally to the vileſt of all created Beings: whereas the Favours granted to the Soul are peculiar to it, and of infinitely greater value. For to paſs by the natural Priviledges of Knowledge, Deſire and a Capacity of improvement; all the ſuperadded Happineſs of our Nature is intirely beſtowed on it alone. All Revelation was given for the Inſtruction of this noble Being, that ſo it might not be inferiour to the Angels in Happineſs, to whom it is little inferiour in Dignity. To reſcue this from the Slavery of Sin and Dominion of the Devil, the Son of God deſcended from Heaven, lived an afflicted Life, and died a ſhame-

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ful Death. Into this, as into a capacious Treasure, are all the Divine Graces conveyed; Graces of which the Body is no more capable, than a Stock or Stone. Lastly by the Merits or Guilt of the Soul, the Body will be hereafter either saved or condemned. If then all the Blessings of Heaven be primarily bestowed upon the Soul; if this be the only receptacle of moral Vertues and Divine Graces, if the Son of God vouchsafed to do and suffer so much for the Salvation of it; if all the future Happiness of the Body depends upon the well-doing of the Soul: certainly this Soul deserveth our greatest Regard and Consideration, as by which alone we obtain the Favour of God, and are made like unto him, by imitating his Perfections, as far as our finite Nature will permit us, in the Practice of Vertue and Holiness of Life.

In the next place, 'tis the Excellency of our Souls alone which distinguisheth one Man from another, and maketh any Person more excellent than his Neighbour. It is a childish mistake of Men to imagine that Riches, or Honour, or temporal Greatness, gives a real Excellency to Mankind, or confers a true

Dignity

Dignity upon the Poſſeſſors of them; Vol. 2.
ſince all theſe outward Advantages are common to the worſt and moſt profligate of Men; who as they are moſt miſerable in themſelves, ſo they deſerve no other than the Slight and Contempt of all who know them. Not to ſay that all theſe things are frail and momentary, of which a Man may be bereaved in an hour, either by the inconſtancy of Fortune, or the Malice of others. But we cannot imagine that our Wiſe Creatour ſhould aſſign that to be our chief Perfection, of which we might either be deprived or defrauded; and that our Happineſs ſhould be in the Power, and at the Mercy of another Man. In that Caſe we ſhould have been more miſerable than all the reſt of the Creation; if it were not in every Man's Power to become Happy. So true is it, that all the Excellency of Man conſiſts in the great and eminent Endowments of his Soul; which the pooreſt of Men may obtain, and when obtained can by no Art or Fraud be taken from him.

Thus the Scripture, giving an account of the eminent Perfections of *Daniel*, the Honour and Reverence paid to him, and Dignities conferr'd upon him, gives this

Vol. 2. as the Reaſon of it: *Becauſe an excellent Spirit was in him*, Dan. VI. 3. It was that alone which cauſed him to ſurpaſs the ordinary Rank of Men, and made him the Favourite of Heaven. Not that a more excellent and perfect Soul was infuſed at firſt into him, than into the reſt of Men; (for all Souls are created equal, and are capable of the ſame Improvements) but that he had adorned it with all the Perfections of Reaſon and Religion, and thereby rendred it worthy the Favour of God, and Eſteem of Men.

And herein clearly appears both the Goodneſs of God, and the Happineſs of Men, that all theſe Improvements and Cultivations of the Soul are equally poſſible to the Pooreſt, as well as the richeſt Men. Poverty and temporal Calamity cannot exclude us from the utmoſt Perfection, and in that from the greateſt Happineſs. It is in the Power of the meaneſt Perſon to be truly more Excellent than his rich Neighbours, and to enſure to himſelf the Favours of Heaven, although not the Riches of the Earth. Thus God hath in Truth made an equal Diſtribution to all Men, by aſſigning to all Souls an equal

equal Capacity. For as for the Goods of Fortune, when put in the Scale with Piety and the intereſts of Religion, they deſerve not the leaſt Conſideration. There are ſome Endowments of the mind indeed which are not common, and cannot be obtained by all Men, as Learning and an exquiſite Knowledge. Theſe may put in a fair Plea for an intrinſick Worth and Excellency, as being inſeparable from the Soul when once acquired; of infinite uſe in this Life, and perhaps greater in the next. But then there are diſadvantages attending ſuch acquired Knowledge, which may juſtly take off the immoderate Deſire of it, and make it become no reaſonable Object of Envy to a pious unlearned Chriſtian. As that it renders the way to Heaven infinitely more difficult to the Poſſeſſors of it; expoſeth them to many and great Temptations, not common to all other Perſons; but chiefly becauſe more and greater Duties are required of them, greater and more ſevere Puniſhments attend the neglect of them. Vol. 2.

In the more unlearned ſort God requireth no more than a hearty Sincerity, Belief and ſure Truſt in the Merits of a Crucified Saviour, and living up to the

Vol. 2. great Truths of Religion, and Principles of common Honesty. In them he willingly over-seeth small and trivial Faults, and imputes not Errors to them, unless they influence and corrupt their Practice. But of the more learned sort of Christians he requireth right Notions of Religion, and worthy Conceptions of the Divine Majesty, employing their knowledge to the good of others, the Edification of the Church; and after all, an exact Observation of the most minute Punctilios of the Divine Laws. In them mistakes are dangerous, and Pardon not so easie to be obtained. If indeed at last they be thought worthy of the Joys of Heaven, they will shine there in a more eminent Station and brighter Glory. But then, even the lowest Degree in Heaven is a greater Happiness, than we can either imagine or conceive.

Thus all the truly desirable Perfections of the Soul are possible to all, and debarr'd from none. Those are no other than an ardent Love of God, an active Zeal to his Service, a strict Sobriety in our selves, and a fervent Charity to all our Neighbours. How far these will advance the Dignity of our Souls appears hence, that these only make us capable of the Joys of

of Heaven; that 'tis the perfect and uninterrupted Poſſeſſion of theſe which maketh Angels, and the want of theſe which maketh Devils. Vol. 2.

Laſtly, Our Body, when conſidered alone, hath nothing excellent beyond other material Creatures, nor is capable of any Improvements. It is taken out of the ſame Maſs of Matter with other Bodies, and after the Separation of the Soul by Death is reſolved into the ſame Corruption, becomes Filth and Rottenneſs, and in Truth the moſt odious of all things. Nay even in this Life, it would be ſubject to the ſame miſerable Condition with the Beaſts of the Field, if it were not actuated by a noble and generous Soul, which reſcues it from the common Calamity of dull and vile Matter, and giveth it the Honour to be joyned to, and be the Companion of, a moſt excellent and immortal Spirit. And ſo far is this Body from receiving new Perfections in this Life, that it continually decays till it be laid in Aſhes, and become as the Dung of the Earth. None yet with the greateſt Care and Diligence could give Beauty to their Bodies, or as our Saviour expreſſeth it, *add one cubit to their ſtature.* None with the greateſt Art and Induſtry

Vol. 2. can make their Senſes more quick and accurate: But certainly not any can procure immortality to their Bodies; a Priviledge which naturally belongs to the Soul.

We believe indeed, That our Bodies ſhall be hereafter inveſted with Immortality, and made Partakers of the Glories of Heaven, but then they ſhall be changed into a ſpiritual Nature; deveſted of theſe groſs Senſes, which now accompany us, and are the great Inſtruments of our Worldly and admired Pleaſures. For then, *There will be neither eating nor drinking, marrying nor giving in marriage; but we ſhall be like the Angels of heaven*, in the Fruition of purely ſpiritual Delights. Which is an invincible Argument of the Vanity and Vileneſs of earthly and carnal Enjoyments: That we cannot be made happy without the loſs of them. If they had been indeed of any real worth, God would have continued them to us in another Life. But ſince he hath made way to the Conſummation of humane Happineſs, by the Aboliſhment of all groſs and ſenſual Pleaſures; and deſpoils the Body, to enrich the Soul: We cannot but conclude theſe tranſitory Enjoyments are light and trifling, incompatible

ble with real Happineſs, and unworthy *the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect.* Vol. 2.

I come next to conſider the Excellency of thoſe peculiar Perfections and Rewards which the Soul is capable of beyond the Body. Thoſe Pleaſures of which alone our Body is capable, and which we are apt ſo much to admire here below, conſiſt only in the Gratification of our Senſes; Delights which are ſo far beneath true Happineſs, that they are common to Beaſts, finite, ſhort, and contemptible. The frequent Repetition of them may be thought to increaſe their worth; but then this very Repetition becomes nauſeous, and is nothing elſe but the Reiteration of the ſame thing. The deſire of them is commonly produced by an irregular Appetite, but always by the infirmity of our Nature; and when performed they leave no Satisfaction behind them. They cloy the Appetite, and by their frequency become troubleſome and even odious to us; are finiſhed in a few moments; and then leave nothing grateful behind them. But which is chiefly to be conſidered, end with our Life, and even in Life may be obſtructed by Diſeaſes and Calamities.

Vol. 2. An eminent Inſtance of this we have in *Solomon*, in whom all the Greatneſs and Pleaſures of the World were joyned. He preſided over a mighty and powerful People, and that in greater Glory, than all the Kings before or after him. So that if Ambition worldly Honour and Pomp, could make him Happy, he poſſeſſed them all in great abundance. If the Fame of Wiſdom, and a profound Veneration among neighbour Nations, could increaſe this Happineſs, it was not wanting to him; to whom the Queen of *Sheba* came *from the fartheſt parts of the Eaſt to hear the wiſdom of* his mouth. If Riches can confer any thing to this deſired Perfection, none can put in a better Claim for it than he, in whoſe time *Gold was eſteemed no more than Iron, and Silver as ſtones for the abundance of it.* Laſtly, if the Pleaſures of Senſe can compleat our Happineſs, none had greater Advantages than he, at whoſe Command was the moſt fruitful part of the World, and who was Bleſſed with a profound and uninterrupted Peace all his Life.

And leaſt we ſhould imagine, that he made no uſe of all theſe Advantages, and ſuppoſed means of Happineſs he aſſureth

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us, Eccleſ. II. 10. That *whatſoever his eyes deſired, he kept not from them; nor with-held his heart from any joy.* Nay by a ſtrange kind of Curioſity, that he might leave nothing unattempted, he tells us, That *he gave his heart to know madneſs and folly*, Eccleſ. I. 17. One who had all theſe Advantages, had run thro' all the Scenes of Pleaſure, and could by his exquiſite Wiſdom and Knowledge of the Nature of things, heighten and refine theſe Pleaſures, muſt be allowed to be a competent Judge of the worth and value of them. Yet after all, he gives this Verdict of them, *Vanity of Vanities all is Vanity.* Vol. 2.

If then no real Happineſs, if no ſolid Pleaſure can be had from the Enjoyments of Senſe, from Riches, and the outward Pomp of the World; we muſt recurr to the Faculties of the Mind, where we ſhall find an Happineſs truly ſolid, and which is more eternal. None but a vaſt and infinite Good can ſatisfie the unbounded Deſires of our Mind, nothing leſs than Eternity it ſelf can ſatiate an immortal Being. For however our Souls be finite, as all other Creatures are, yet our Wills have no limits, but continually deſire ſomewhat more; unleſs that Good which they

Vol. 2. they already poſſeſs, can receive no farther Additions. This Good is no other than God, who alone can fix our reſtleſs Wills, and by his infinite Perfections raviſh them with Wonder and Pleaſure at the ſame time. This is a Happineſs truly peculiar to ſpiritual Beings, who alone can contemplate the Majeſty and inimitable Goodneſs of their Creator; and, by ſo doing, ſecure to themſelves an Happineſs infinite in it ſelf, not inferior to the vaſt Deſires of the Will, which ſurviveth all the changes of Fortune, Malice of Men, and even Death it ſelf.

If we cannot, or will not, believe the Greatneſs of theſe ſpiritual Pleaſures, their convenience to the Nature of our Souls, and the infinite duration of them; 'tis becauſe we are unacquainted with them; immerſed in groſs and earthly Delights ſo far, that we are neither willing, nor perhaps able to receive theſe greater and more real Enjoyments, by attending ſo much to the things of this World, we have even changed the Nature and Nobleneſs of our Souls, and from Guides and Directors made them mere Inſtruments to our Bodies, deveſted them of all remembrance of their Divine Original, degraded

degraded them into a ſervile Condition, and were we not ſometimes put in mind of the intereſt of another World, ſhould perhaps forget that we were created in a Condition little lower than the Angels. Vol. 2.

Thus far Reaſon teacheth us, That the intereſts of the Soul are to be preferred to thoſe of the Body: Revelation doth the ſame no leſs fully. This was the great end of the Chriſtian Religion, to wean our Affections from worldly Pleaſures, and fix them upon things above; to withdraw us by degrees from the Earth, and ſeat us at laſt in Heaven. To this the whole Genius and Temper of our Religion plainly tends, commanding us to be ready at all times to take up the Croſs, undergo Perſecutions, embrace Afflictions, and even ſuffer Death, when the intereſt of our Souls requireth us to do it. Thus our Saviour tells us, *He who loveth Father and Mother, Wife or Poſſeſſions, beyond him, is not fit to be his Diſciple:* And among other Precepts, commands that his Followers ſhould *deny themſelves*, that is, be ready to part with all the Pleaſures of the World, and imaginary Delights of Nature, when they ſtand in Competition with the intereſts of another Life. This Duty is

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Vol. 2. so strict, that for the Observation of the most minute Precept, all Considerations of wordly Profit and Pleasure must be foregone; and the whole Body destroyed, rather than the Soul in the least be injured.

Our Saviour gave us an eminent Example of this in himself; who in that Life which he was pleased to lead on Earth for the Salvation of a miserable and wretched World, used none of all those Pleasures, which we so much admire, and greedily hunt after; denied to himself even the Conveniencies of Nature, and therein put his Body to greater Hardships than the very Beasts. *For the Foxes have holes, and the Birds of the Air have nests; but the Son of Man had not whereon to lay his head.* As for Pains and Torments, which we so much dread, and are certainly the greatest Calamities which can attend the Body, he willingly underwent them, suffered himself to be Crucified as a Malefactor, chiefly indeed to appease the Divine Anger, and atone for our Sins; but in the second place, to give us an Example with how great readiness and Patience, we ought to submit to all Afflictions, and even Death it self, when they tend to promote the interests of the Soul.

If

If then the Commands of God, and the Example of Christ can perswade us; if Divine Revelation, and the remembrance of the Holy Jesus can move us; there is no doubt to be made of this great Truth, *so plainly* taught and revealed in Scripture, that I will not any longer insist upon it. Vol. 2.

I pass to the second Proposition, that the Interests of the Soul are destroyed by Sin or Disobedience to the Laws of God: These Laws were at first given to direct the Soul in the way to Happiness; and, when complyed with, fail not to obtain their End. No wonder then, if when we neglect these means, we miss the End; and, by pursuing contrary Methods, render our selves miserable. That ye may the better be convinced of this, I will speak of the Effects of Sin upon the Soul in general, and of this Sin of Apostacy, to which our Text more peculiarly relates in particular.

As to the first then, we may observe, That sin is contrary to the very Nature of the Soul, which is a Rational Being, and as such ought to govern and direct its Actions according to the Laws of Reason. Otherwise it would be worse than insensible Beings, which all perform the

Vol. 2. the ſeveral ends of their Creation, and by ſo doing perform the Commands of their Creatour. Whereas the Soul in contracting Habits of ſin violates the Laws of Reaſon, debaſes its own Nature, rebels againſt God, and overthrows the end of its Creation. For for this very end our Souls were created, that they ſhould Act as ſpiritual Beings, and govern themſelves by the Principles of Reaſon inſerted in them. For this Purpoſe God gave us an underſtanding to diſtinguiſh betweeen good and evil, that we might be able to imitate the Perfections of our Creatour in Vertue and Holineſs, and by a ſtrict Obſervation of the Rules of Life formed by our Reaſon, at leaſt maintain, if not advance our Nature. When afterwards through the Ignorance and Degeneracy of Men, theſe Rules were corrupted, and our Judgments blinded, God gave us a ſtanding Revelation, to aſcertain to us our Duty, and let us know what we have to do. The performance of this was the end for which we were ſent into the World, had Reaſon given us, and a Soul aſſigned to us. To neglect our Duty then, or violate it by the Commiſſion of Sin, is no other than to deny and diſclaim our Nature, defeat the ends

ends of our Creation, and degenerate into a miſerable ſort of Being. For as Sin turn'd Angels into Devils; ſo it doth the Souls of Men into ſomewhat worſe than Devils. 'Tis true, they will ſtill continue Souls, but that doth but augment their Miſery, becauſe, being immortal, they will never ceaſe to be miſerable, always gnawed with the Conſcience of their degenerous Actions, and the Horror of their own depraved Natures. Vol. 2.

Secondly, Sin deſtroyeth the very formal Happineſs of the Soul, which conſiſts in the Love of God, the Contemplation of his Attributes, and the Admiration of his Perfection, as we before proved. And in theſe will conſiſt the Joys of Heaven, in a conſtant and ſerene Meditation upon the unparallel'd Perfections of our Creatour, in an ardent and perpetual Love of him, and Conſcience of being loved by him. Now Sin ſets a Man at Enmity with God, makes him unworthy his Favour, and hinders all ſuch Contemplation. For how can we think on him with delight, whom we account our Enemy? Or how can we not eſteem him our Enemy whoſe Laws we violate, and whoſe Precepts we contemn? The Conſcience of this Divine Anger alone

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Vol. 2. is a greater unhappineſs than can be eaſily imagined.

When a Soul is forced to ſay, God hath created me and doth now preſerve me, but thinks me unworthy of his Benefits, and eſteems me as the worſt of his Creatures. 'Tis true he gave me Reaſon and Underſtanding, but they are to my Deſtruction and Miſery. I acknowledge him to be an infinite Being worthy of all love and dread, but he denieth to me the influences of his Favour, doth not indeed annihilate me; but 'tis becauſe he reſerveth greater Puniſhments for me. He put me here into a State of Probation on Earth, that I might fit my ſelf to be his Attendant in Heaven; but now he hath excluded me from all Hopes of his Favour, and deſtined me to be a Companion of Devils. Such melancholly Thoughts will render the Soul truly miſerable, and not only unhappy, but uncapable of Happineſs.

For a Soul corrupted with Sin is no more capable of the Joys of Heaven, than is a blind Man of ſeeing the Light of the Sun. They are Delights of a purely ſpiritual Nature, and conſiſt in an intire Conformity to the Will of God; ſo that if Heaven ſhould by an unaccountable

table Miracle be beſtowed upon wicked Men, the Pleaſures of it would neither reliſh with them, nor be grateful to them. Vol. 2.

Laſtly, Sin defeats the future Intereſts of the Soul, by excluding it from its intended Reward, and engaging it in eternal Puniſhments. For in this Life the Soul is no more than Probationer for another, being a Being of it ſelf capable of Perfection, and by the ſingular Mercy of God to be endowed with it. So that it Acts here only in order to the Attainment of that great Perfection which we hope for hereafter; and by a prudent uſe of this World gaineth Admittance into the next, where it ſhall be received to the immediate Preſence of God; and him whom it now views darkly and imperfectly, ſhall then ſee *face to face*. This will give the laſt Perfection to our Natures, and raiſe them to the higheſt pitch, to which they can be advanced.

But Sin depriveth the Soul of this Happineſs, and thereby permits it not to obtain its end. A loſs much greater, than Thought can imagine, or Tongue expreſs; but ſtill greater; when conſidered, not only as a bare loſs of the Joys of Heaven, but a fall into the bottom of

Vol. 2. Hell; where ſuch Puniſhments will be inflicted, as will make the Soul deſirous of Annihilation. And then the Excelency of its Nature will be ſo far from helping it, that it will infinitely aggravate the ſharpneſs of its Pains. For its Immortality will render them eternal, and its Underſtanding will heighten the ſenſe and feeling of them.

In this Life Sinners often are pleaſed with their own miſerable Condition, and Fancy themſelves ſeated in Paradiſe, when environed with Pleaſures, and glutted with Enjoyments. They can ſtifle the Dictates of their Conſciences, and ſecurely make uſe of thejr imaginary Happineſs. But in Hell *their fire is not quenched, and their worm dieth not.* The Sharpneſs of their Torments will not ſuffer them to reſt. And if thoſe ſhould be extinguiſhed, yet will they ſtill be tormented with an inward Fire, ſo much the more violent, becauſe then they will be certainly convinced in Judgment, that they acted againſt their own Intereſts, and the plain Rule of Reaſon, in running the Danger of eternal Puniſhments, for the ſake of a few groſs and trifling Pleaſures.

We may next conſider the peculiar influence of that Sin which our Saviour here

here chiefly intends. This is the Sin of Apoſtacy, or denial of the true Religion; againſt which Chriſt fore-arms his Followers, by inculcating this neceſſary truth of preferring the goods of the Soul to thoſe of the Body. For this foul Sin is ever committed for ſome temporal End, being too odious to recommend it ſelf without ſome outward Advantages. Men deny not their God, out of a diſlike or disbelief of him, but to ſecure to themſelves a Fortune in the World, prevent ſome Inconveniences, or gratifie ſome Luſts. Vol. 2.

This is a Crime of the ſame Nature and Contagion with Idolatry under the old Law. For to worſhip a falſe God is the ſame thing as to deny the true one, and the firſt cannot be done without the latter. How heinous God accounted this, appeareth from the whole Tenour of the Moſaick Law, which is chiefly directed againſt this Sin alone. All the Writings of the Prophets are employed againſt it; and all the Judgments, which God ever inflicted upon his People of *Iſrael* are ſolely owing to this Cauſe: Inſomuch, as there is no Record left in ſacred Hiſtory, of any Pardon ever granted to the Commiſſion of this Sin.

And indeed a wilful Apoſtacy from the

Vol. 2. true Religion diſſolves the very Union between God and Man, and leaves no place for Pardon. Such a Perſon openly by his Act proclaims to the World, that he will have nothing to do with God, bids defiance to him, and diſclaims his Pardon. It would proſtitute the Divine Mercy, and make it cheap and eaſie, to beſtow it upon ſuch execrable Villanies, which do violence to Heaven, and are the very laſt Efforts of Impiety. This cannot but degrade the Soul from its Affinity to God, and debar it from all nearer approach to his Preſence. We cannot hope to have any Intereſt left in God after a denial of him, nor can without Horror entertain any remembrance of him. How then ſhall we make our Souls happy with the continual Meditation of his Perfections; or pleaſe our ſelves with the Hopes of the future Fruition of him? In that Caſe it will be our Intereſt to baniſh all thoughts of God, and remove from our ſelves, as far as poſſible, all Conſiderations of a future State; that ſo we may not be alarmed with the dread of an angry God, and the Terrors of future Torments. Thus a denial of God againſt the Light of our own Conſciences doth not only render us unhappy, but cauſeth

causeth us to endeavour to become yet more unhappy, by a total and wilful stifling of all Thoughts and Meditations of God, in which alone true Happiness consists. Vol. 2.

And this is true not only in the Case, of notorious Apostacy, when any one openly renounceth his Religion and denieth his belief of the true God; which Case, in these peaceable times of the Church doth not often happen; but also in the Commission of every deliberate Sin, which in truth is a no less formal Apostacy from God, than that before-mentioned; where the Sinner puts in the Scale the present Pleasure and Convenience of the Sin, with the future Consequence and Divine Prohibition of it; and after having weighed each, rejects the Command of God, of which he is very Conscious, and prefers the present Satisfaction of the Sin. This is done in every deliberate Sin, and this is indeed a no less true Apostacy, than an open denial of God. For this we may be assured, that whosoever upon a deliberate Choice prefers the seeming Pleasures of any sin to the Command of God, would never forego all the Pleasures of this Life, and even Life it self, in obedience to the Will of God.

Vol. 2. It remains that I make ſome Application of what hath been ſaid. Firſt then, if the Intereſts of the Soul be much greater than thoſe of the Body, and the Happineſs of the Soul conſiſts only in the due Contemplation of God, and the poſſeſſion of Piety and Vertue; let us endeavour to render our Soul, even in this Life, as Happy as we poſſibly can. It is not reaſonable, that all the Cares of our Life ſhould be employed in providing Neceſſaries or rather Superfluities to the Body, or attending to the Pleaſures of it: That no farther uſe ſhould be made of the Soul, than to ſerve as a Slave to the Body, to heighten its Enjoyments, and refine its Pleaſures. Let us remember that we carry about with us a more noble Being, which deſerveth our Care in the firſt place, and cannot be neglected without the loſs of Happineſs.

May not God juſtly ſay to Mankind, I have given to you great and Celeſtial Souls, endued with wonderful Perfections, and capable of much greater, when rightly cultivated; your Bodies I formed from the Clay of the Earth, but your Souls I ſent down from Heaven; the one I permit to return to Corruption, but the

the other I have inveſted with Immor- Vol. 2.
tality? How juſtly might I expect that
you would have valued theſe two accord-
ing to their ſeveral worth and Dignity:
That you ſhould not indeed ſtarve the
Body, nor Tyrannize over it, but how-
ever attend chiefly to the Concerns of
the Soul; that it might not fall ſhort of
that Happineſs which I intended for it,
nor be deprived of thoſe ſpiritual En-
joyments which it is capable of? But
alas! Man is turned back and grown
fooliſh, employeth himſelf with all his
Diligence to procure Pleaſures for his Bo-
dy; *riſes early, ſits up late, and eats the
bread of carefulneſs*, to heap up Riches
for the Continuation of theſe Bodily En-
joyments; makes this the only Buſineſs
of his Life, and thinks of nothing elſe.
As for his Soul he makes it a Slave to his
Body, refuſeth to receive Directions from
it, and ſometimes forgets that he hath
any. What ſhall we anſwer to theſe
Expoſtulations of God? I fear we can-
not plead Innocence. Our Actions
and the whole Courſe of our Lives de-
monſtrate the contrary. We are
continually buſie about enlarging
our petty Acquiſitions in the World,
we trouble and turmoil our ſelves about

Vol. 2. the Conveniencies of the Body: but afford no leiſure to the Soul to meditate upon the Greatneſs and Worth of her Creator, the neceſſity of her own Duties, and to form theſe Meditations into Habits of Vertue, and thereby procure to our ſelves that real Happineſs even in this Life, which is infinitely more valuable, than all the Riches and Poſſeſſions of the World when joyned in one.

Again Secondly, If the Happineſs of the Soul in this Life deſerveth our greateſt Care, much more doth the welfare of it in a future State, as being free from all Paſſions and Infirmities of the Body, and which is more, eternal. This ought to be the Buſineſs and Employment of our whole Lives, that we fail not of the Conſummation of our Hopes and Crown of our Happineſs. And it would be ſo, if we were throughly perſwaded of the Exiſtence and immortality of our Souls, of the Greatneſs and Importance of their Intereſts, and the infinite Preſence which is due to theſe beyond thoſe of our Body. For can it be, that we are perſwaded of the Truths of theſe things, and yet Act as though we had neither Souls nor Reaſons; that we believe the Exiſtence of another more Glorious and laſting State,

State, and yet ſet up our reſt in this; that we hope for the appearance of a Judge at the laſt day, and yet never think of making our Accounts ready? Let us reflect upon the Nature of our Souls, and juſtly weigh the great Intereſt of them; conſider the Vanity of worldly Pleaſures, and the ſhortneſs and inconſtancy of this frail Life; remember the Glories of Heaven, and the inconceivable Happineſs of another Life; and we muſt either put off our Reaſon, or employ it in purſuing thoſe Intereſts, which do ſo greatly and ſo nearly concern us. Vol. 2.

Let us be ſo brave and generous as not to think that we *die like the beaſts that periſh*; that we were made for greater and more noble Ends, intended for the Favour of God, and Society of Angels; that we carry about with us ſpiritual Beings which cannot die, and will receive no Prejudice by the Diſſolution of the Body; that theſe Souls were deſigned by God to receive a Participation of his own Glory, and will certainly do ſo, if they be not debarr'd from it by our fatal Stupidity and Neglect; and that in providing for this more Excellent part of us, we ſecure likewiſe a Manſion for the Body, which at the general Reſurrection ſhall be

Vol. 2. be received into the ſame Station, and undergo the ſame fate with the Soul.

If we were perfectly perſwaded of the Truth of all this; we could not conſign our ſelves up to purſue the Vanities of the World, and heap up Riches, which are of no Service for the Intereſts of another Life, and promote not our real Happineſs in this. Can you be ſuppoſed to believe all this, and at the ſame time imploy your Lives upon the Practice of the contrary? Hope for the Perfection deſigned, and make no ſtep towards the Attainment of it; rather let us endeavour with our utmoſt Vigour to maintain that Degree which God hath aſſigned to us among created Beings; and not by our Degeneracy become the vileſt and moſt miſerable of all Creatures. Let us do nothing unworthy that noble Being, which is ſeated within us, nor cloath the Body with the Spoils of it. Let us maintain the Dignity and Character of our Natures, by a ſevere and unblemiſht Integrity, and procure to our ſelves an aſſurance of thoſe Perfections which are allotted to us. Certainly in worldly Matters, we willingly over-ſee leſſer and more trivial Gains for obtaining of a greater and more ſubſtantial

tial Profit; and ſhould we not ſlight the impertinent Gayeties, and vile Allurements of the World, to ſecure to our ſelves *a treaſure which fadeth not, eternal in the Heavens*?

Laſtly, if the Benefits of the Soul be ever preferrable to the Intereſts of the Body; if all the Glories, and Riches of this World be of ſmall account, when oppoſed to the Happineſs of the next; if the Favour of God, and Concerns of Religion, be the only true Perfections of Mankind: a firm Conſtancy in the Exerciſe and Profeſſion of Religion although attended in this Life with the greateſt Inconveniences, Diſcouragments and Afflictions, will not only be our Duty, but our higheſt Intereſt. This is the natural Conſequence of the words of my Text, and the Concluſion which our Saviour himſelf drew from them, in the following Verſe, with which I ſhall conclude, *Whoſoever therefore ſhall be aſhamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and ſinful generation; of him alſo ſhall the Son of man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father with the Holy Angels.*

The Ninth SERMON.

Preach'd on the 20th. of *November*, 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

St. Luke XVI. 31.

If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded, though one roſe from the dead.

THESE words are the Concluſion of a remarkable Parable of our Saviour, and ſeem to be the Scope to which his whole Diſcourſe was therein directed; to ſhew the Vanity of that Pretence, wherewith unreaſonable Men have been wont to defend or excuſe their Sins; the uncertainty of the Rewards and Puniſhments of another Life, ariſing from the defect of a viſible Experience of them, or an undenia-

undeniable Atteſtation of the Truth of them by conſtant Miracles. Vol. 2.

It was not for the peculiar Doctrines of Chriſt alone that the Jews required a Sign to be given to them, to demonſtrate the Truth of them; but alſo in their ancient and received Doctrines they entertained Scruples, becauſe not confirmed by a conſtant Continuation of the ſame Miracles, which at firſt eſtabliſhed them. An incredulity, as it ſhould ſeem Hereditary to the Jews, and renewed as often as the Divine Miracles were interrupted. No ſooner was *Joſhua* dead, and that Generation *which had ſeen all the great works of the Lord, which he had done for Iſrael*, as we are told in *Judges* II. but the next Generation even loſt the Knowledge of God, *they knew not the Lord*, as it is there expreſſed: and altho' Miracles were continued down among them by the Miniſtration of the Prophets and Holy Men; yet as theſe could be viſible but to a certain Number, they produced no univerſal influence, affected not the reſt; and even in thoſe who ſaw them, they ſeemed to have produced no other effect than wonder and Amuſement. They ſtill continued their disbelief of thoſe Promiſes and Threats, which

Vol. 2. which they ſaw not yet effected, and of that future State, which they did not yet perceive.

And it were to be wiſhed that this incredulity of the Jews had been ſo hereditary to them, as to be peculiar to them; but it hath found place even among Chriſtians alſo; many of whom have even renounced and denied their Faith, becauſe themſelves could not ſee thoſe Miracles, upon the Authority of which Chriſtianity was at firſt founded. Others become irreſolute and remiſs in the Proſecution of their Duty, as being upon the ſame account unſatisfied in the event of it. And all pretend that there is no Duty ſo difficult which they would not practiſe, no Pleaſure ſo grateful which they would not Renounce; if God would ſatisfie their Doubts, raiſe their Attention, and awaken their Thoughts, by ſome extraordinary Admonition or Operation, ſuch as the working of a Miracle, or ſending one from the Grave, to aſſure them of the reality of another State from his own Experience.

That Men ſhould make ſuch Pretences for their Irreligion, is no wonder; ſin appears odious and ugly to all even at the firſt Sight, and ever wants ſome Cloak

to

to hide its Deformity; or that their Curiosity should prompt them to such unreasonable Fancies, is not strange. The Desires of Men are wanton; and 'tis not the Body alone that hath irregular Lusts attending it. It is only to be admired that Men should not easily discover the Vanity of this Pretence; for the discovery of which our Lord hath plainly marked out the way to us in this excellent Parable; wherein the Example of a rich voluptuous Man is proposed to us, either disbelieving, or at least putting far from him the Thoughts of another Life, and therefore busying himself wholly in the Pleasures of this World. On the other side we have a poor despised and afflicted Man, who in prospect of the Rewards of another Life patiently endured the Afflictions of this. Then the event of this different Conduct is proposed to us; the one translated to *the bosom of* Abraham, that is, either to an eminent Station in Heaven, as some expound it, or to a Condition of Peace and Tranquility, as others: The other condemned to a State of Torments, to a Punishment so rigorous, that therein even the most inconsiderable Refreshment would appear to him the greatest Happiness; and that, altho' received by the means

Vol. 2. means of one whom he had formerly ſo much contemned; deſiring only that *Lazarus, might be ſent to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue.* He now becomes ſenſible of the certainty of thoſe different States after Life, which he had before either disbelieved, or not conſidered. The Rewards of good Men he finds in *Lazarus* whom *he ſeeth afar off in Abrahams boſom.* The Puniſhments of bad Men he experienceth in himſelf; and to compleat his Miſery, is aſſured from *Abraham*, that the State of each is wholly unalterable, an *unpaſſable gulf being fixt between them.*

In this miſerable Condition he cannot but reflect upon his own unhappineſs; his inceſſant Pains will not permit him to lay aſide thoſe Thoughts; and then it is but natural to recal to Mind and bewail the Cauſes of it. He remembers, that all which now befals him, had been indeed foretold unto him; but that himſelf had not, while alive, entred into a ſerious Conſideration of it; as not being favoured with any extraordinary Admonition, which might ſtrike his Thoughts and fix them to a ſerious reflection on his Duty. The Conſcience of his own Miſery maketh him deſirous, that none dear unto

unto him, ſhould fall into the ſame Ca- Vol. 2.
lamity; and then judging that what had been the occaſion of his unhappineſs, might alſo become their Ruin, the diſbelief or inconſideration of a future State; he deſireth to prevent it; begging of *Abraham to ſend Lazarus from the dead to his five brethren, to teſtifie unto them, leaſt they alſo come into this place of torment.* But in return to this, he is told, that his deſire is unreaſonable; ſince God hath provided an ordinary means for their Inſtruction, *They have Moſes and the Prophets; let them hear them;* Ver. 29. and that even altho' granted, it would be unſucceſsful: *For if they hear not Moſes and the Prophets; neither will they be perſwaded though one roſe from the dead.*

The Parable was ſpoken to the Jews, to whom nothing was expreſly revealed concerning the Rewards or Puniſhments of another Life. So that it may be admired how *Abraham* could remit the Brethren of *Dives* to *Moſes and the Prophets* for ſatisfaction in this Matter, when *Moſes and the Prophets* have nothing expreſs concerning it.

To this we may anſwer, That the opinion of future Rewards and Puniſhments was at that time univerſally enter-

Vol. 2. tained among the Jews; and that drawn from the Law of *Moſes*, and Writings of the Prophets and inſpired Men, by Interpretations generally received among them. Their Scribes and Doctors, to whom our Saviour ſends the People for Inſtruction, and from whom they received without ſcruple the Explication of their Law, reſolved all the Promiſes and Threats of God into this Senſe; ſo that thoſe to whom our Lord ſpoke, made no doubt, but that all this was to be learned from *Moſes and the Prophets*; and that it might be indeed deduced by juſt Inference, we may be ſatisfied from that Argument of our Saviour, wherewith he convinced the *Sadduces*; and on which the Author of the *Hebrews* ſo largely inſiſted after him; the not performing of any extraordinary Benefits to the Patriarchs in this Life by God, after the beſtowing of very ample and magnificent Promiſes of Rewards upon them. Whence it infallibly followed, that ſince God was true and could not be falſe to his Promiſe; he reſerved the performance of it to another Life.

But we need not go ſo far to juſtifie this Expreſſion of our Saviour; ſince his Deſign

Design in this place was not so much to treat of the Nature or certainty of Rewards or Punishments after Death, as to confute the Pretence of those Sinners, who in defence of their Sins alledged the want of extraordinary Conviction. For since God hath prepared ordinary means of Conviction, and those abundantly sufficient for their designed end, in vain were any extraordinary means desired. Since if the Threats and Promises of God, whether relating to this or another Life, contained in the Writings of *Moses and the Prophets*; if all the Arguments, whereon the Truths of those Revelations were at first established, could not engage Men to the Practice of their Duty, could not induce them to the belief or desire of those Promises, and to the fear of those Threats; if this ordinary method of Conviction proved ineffectual, neither would the extraordinary Attestation of the Divine Will by constant Miracles, or of the consequences of it, by the Apparition of deceased Men, who had experienced them, have any better Success. In Prosecution therefore of our Lords design in these words I will shew, Vol. 2.

Vol. 2. I. That the Desire of extraordinary Conviction is unreasonable.

II. That such extraordinary means of Conviction would be unuseful and unsuccessful.

As to the First, It is the Property not of God alone, but of all rational Agents also, not to Act in vain, but always for some Cause, and in Prosecution of some Design. When therefore God hath ordained sufficient means for the Conviction of all Men in the ordinary methods of Salvation, which he hath established, it would be vain and trifling to practise extraordinary Methods; since this could tend to no end, every reasonable end being supplied by the ordinary Means; and that the ordinary means doth supply the end perfectly and sufficiently, we cannot doubt without calling in question the Wisdom of God who established it; but if it would be unreasonable in God to practise such extraordinary Methods, it will be absurd in Man to desire it; since 'tis impossible that God should do any unreasonable thing.

Further, if the Majesty and Wisdom of God should permit it, it would yet be an intolerable Presumption in Man to desire or expect it. Our great Creator in

in framing the Univerſe, whereof Mankind is but a ſmall part, ſettled general Laws, whereby every part of it might be governed and directed. Not any part of the whole Creation, moveth, but in Vertue of theſe general Laws, nor can all together deviate in the leaſt from them. Now every Miracle is an Alteration of theſe general Laws; therein God ſupercedes the ordinary Courſe of the World, and produceth ſomewhat, which would never have happened without his extraordinary Interpoſition. What a Preſumption then would it be in Man to require that God ſhould exert his Omnipotence, as often as his vain Imagination ſhould expect it; or that the conſtant Courſe of the World ſhould be altered to pleaſe his Fancy?

It is indeed a great miſtake of many Deiſts, that no Caſe can happen, wherein it ſhall be fitting to change the Courſe of Nature, and Act in a miraculous manner; that were to limit the Power of God, and to bereave him of the Attribute of infinite Goodneſs diſpenſing its ſelf in extraordinary Emanations to Mankind. But it is a no leſs inſolence to Deſire, that the Divine Power ſhould attend every idle Motion or Capricio, and work a Miracle

Vol. 2. as often as Man ſhould entertain a doubt. Not to ſay that this would vilifie the Majeſty of God; and that it ſuppoſeth ſome greater Dignity in Man than is really in him, as if all the Creation ſhould be reverſed or altered to ſatisfie his Will. This would deſtroy even the end of Miracles, which loſe their Majeſty and their Efficacy by being proſtituted upon every mean Account. For if peculiar Miracles muſt be wrought to ſatisfie the Doubts of every Man, they muſt be ſo frequent, that it would be impoſſible to know what the fixed Courſe of Nature were, and ſo equally impoſſible to diſcern miraculous from natural Actions. Or if they could be ſeparated, yet one would be no more regarded than the other; ſince it is the rareneſs and ſuprizingneſs of it which makes a Miracle conſiderable. And it is moſt certain, that the Power of God doth no leſs truly and fully exert it ſelf in every ordinary Act of Nature, than in the greateſt Miracle. Only the latter, being never performed but for ſome great and noble End, is juſtly eſteemed the Indication of ſome particular Will of God; which it could not be, if it were as frequent as the ordinary Effect of Nature; nor could it be

leſs

leſs frequent, if it were always to be Vol. 2.
oppoſed to the Doubts and Scruples of
private Men.

Again, it muſt be remembred, that in propoſing any Religion to us, God deals with us as with rational Creatures; he giveth us ſufficient means of Inſtruction; but as he forceth not our Will, ſo neither our Underſtanding. If the Principles of Faith were as demonſtrative as Geometrical Propoſitions, as it would be impoſſible, that any ſhould be Infidels; ſo neither would it be in the leaſt commendable to be Believers: no more worthy of Reward, than to believe thoſe Axioms which we cannot disbelieve, without forcing our Underſtandings, and giving the Lye to our own Reaſon.

All Religion, and the annexing of Rewards to it, ſuppoſeth ſomewhat in the Power of Man to embrace or reject, but this would not be, if as often as any Man ſhould entertain a Doubt, God ſhould viſibly interpoſe, and deter him from it by ſome amazing Act of Omnipotence. Whereas the knowledge of God and true Religion, if it be ſuppoſed laudable or capable of any Reward, muſt require a ſuitable Diligence in Enquiry; a fit Preparation of Mind

Vol. 2. for the Reception of it, by removing all corrupt Paſſions and Inclinations, which may oppoſe the Admiſſion of it; a ſerious Examination of the Arguments which recommend it; a firm Expectation of the Promiſes of God, although not yet perceived by Senſe, nor aſcertained by any Proof equivalent to Senſe, yet confirmed by Arguments, which in a mind fitly diſpoſed, and rightly judging cannot be rejected. All theſe ends are excellently ſupplied in a fixed and ſtanding Rule of Faith, wherein Divine Revelations are conveyed by the Miniſtration of Men; whereby neither the Divine Omnipotence is proſtituted, in working Miracles upon all occaſions, nor the order of Nature continually reverſed, nor the Pride of Man fomented, nor his Underſtanding forced, nor the Merit of Faith defeated, but the Delivery of the Divine Will is performed in an eaſie, ſafe and ſufficient method.

And when ſuch an excellent method is once ſettled by the Divine Wiſdom, it is moſt unreaſonable to imagine, that God will violate or overturn it for the ſake of any private Man. For this were to ſuppoſe, That ſome Emergencies may happen not provided for in the general Conſtitution,

ſtitution, and which God did not foreſee when he made that Eſtabliſhment. Which ſufficiently demonſtrates not only the unreaſonableneſs of thoſe Men, who require particular Miracles for their private Scruples; but alſo the Vanity and miſtake of thoſe Enthuſiaſts, who after this ordinary Rule of Faith is ſettled, pretend to have received their Syſtem of Religion from extraordinary Inſpiration. For either the fixed Rule muſt be inſufficient to teach them the Faith, which to affirm is a diſhonour to God; or their Faith muſt be ſomewhat different from that contained in the ordinary Rule, which themſelves will not allow; or God muſt Act in vain when he beſtows ſuch unneceſſary Illumination on them. The true Reaſon of ſuch Mens fond conceit, is no other than a vehement Pride, whereby they ſcorn to be included in the common Rank and Diſcipline of Chriſtians; and from a haughty eſteem of their own Merits affect to diſtinguiſh themſelves from others by bold Pretences, expecting ſomewhat extraordinary ſhould be done for them, as being extraordinary Perſons. Which is true not only in them, but in all who deſire particular Miracles to be wrought for their ſatisfaction. For of theſe, few

Vol. 2. few or none are ſo unreaſonable, as to think it convenient that the ſame Favour ſhould be extended to all Mankind; but imagining themſelves to be more worthy, and as it were of a higher Rank than their fellow Creatures, preſume to expect that ſomewhat more ſhould be done for them than for other Men.

After all, if none of theſe Reaſons forbid the Expectation of ſuch extraordinary Methods to be indulged to any; yet if they ſhould appear no leſs ineffectual, when beſtowed, than the ordinary Methods are; it would be highly unreaſonable to deſire them. So that to all which I have offered upon this Head, a new Confirmation will ariſe from the Conſideration of the ſecond thing propoſed, Namely.

II. That ſuch extraordinary means of Conviction would be no leſs unuſeful and unſuccesful, than are the ordinary means. And that will appear, either if we reflect on the Reaſons, which defeat the Succeſs of the ordinary means, or the force of thoſe Objections to which both Methods are liable. The true Cauſe which renders the ordinary means unſucceſsful, is not the want of Evidence, but the oppoſition of it to the Luſts and Paſſions of Men,

Men. It finds no welcome Reception in the World, becauſe contrary to the Genius of it; it abridgeth the Senſuality, the corrupt Deſires and inclinations of Mankind. A covetous Man will not obey it, leaſt he ſhould forego the immoderate Love of Riches. A carnal Man will not receive it, leaſt he be obliged to reſtrain his admired Enjoyments. It forbiddeth Revenge, Envy and Malice, and therefore Minds poſſeſſed with theſe Vices cannot bear it. Vol. 2.

Theſe are the Impediments which defeat the Efficacy of the Chriſtian Religion; they plead more ſtrongly, and perſwade more effectually, than the Arguments, which recommend that excellent Religion. Few or none, who enter into the Conſideration of it, perceive not the juſt Motives of its Credibility. They acknowledge it reaſonable to Aſſent to it; but then comparing the Pleaſure of ſin forbidden by it, with the certainty of thoſe Promiſes and Threats which are annexed to it; they willingly overſee and reject the latter, that they may not forego the former. And while Men act thus againſt the Dictates of Reaſon, no Evidence of Miracles will be able to reform them. If any ſuch were perfom-

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Vol. 2. ed for their ſatisfaction; it could have no other Effect, than to convince them of the reaſonableneſs and truth of that Religion, in Confirmation of which they were wrought; and this Conviction is already ſufficiently performed by the ordinary means. So that in both Caſes Reaſon directs them to embrace and obey this Divine Revelation; and if in one Caſe the direction of reaſon be rejected, it can ſcarce be hoped that in another it will be admitted.

For all true Piety and Religion proceeds upon this Principle, a Reſolution of performing whatſoever Reaſon ſhall direct. And if this Principle be once violated, it is no matter, whether the Evidence of Reaſon be greater or leſs; ſince the Man is reſolved not to obey it, any farther than it ſhall agree with his own Luſts. For Miracles affect the underſtanding only, they reform not the Will of Man. They induce him indeed to look up to the Author of them, from whom he is to receive direction, but remove not thoſe Luſts and Paſſions, which oppoſe the performance of that Divine Direction. The ſame irregular Deſires continue, the ſame Affections poſſeſs his Soul, and will infallibly render the greateſt

eſt Evidence of Duty unſucceſsful; until a firm Reſolution be formed by him of performing whatſoever ſhall appear to be his Duty, of ſubmitting to whatſoever Reaſon ſhall direct, of Aſſenting to whatſoever it ſhall recommend. And when this Reſolution is once formed, the ordinary means ſetled for the Conveyance of Religion, will obtain equal Succeſs with any extraordinary methods whatſoever; ſince even in that, ſufficient Evidence may be found to convince Mankind of the truth of it; and therefore Reaſon directs and requires Obedience and Aſſent to it. Vol. 2.

No wonder then that the Jews, even under the Government of *Moſes*, while they enjoyed the ſight of frequent Miracles, nay for Forty years together were fed by a conſtant Miracle, continued ſtill no leſs diſobedient, made frequent Apoſtacies from God, rebelled againſt his Prophet, by whoſe Miniſtration thoſe Miracles were performed, and could never be brought to any tolerable ſenſe or practice of Religion. In departing out of *Egypt* they had not left their vicious Inclinations behind them, but retained the ſame Senſuality and Perverſeneſs of mind. In which Caſe it was not poſſible that the

Vol. 2. the cleareſt Demonſtration of Divine Revelation could make any impreſſion on them. It was all one whether God wrought one or ten thouſand Miracles for their ſatisfaction; ſince one alone might convince them, and all together could do no more; as a blind Man receives no more advantage from the light of the Sun, than from a ſingle Star. Our Lord indeed ſaith, in Matth. XI. 21. That *if the mighty works which were done in Bethſaida* (among the Jews) *had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in ſackcloth and aſhes.* But this may well be ſuppoſed to have been ſaid, rather to exaggerate the Impenitence and Perverſeneſs of the Jews, than to declare what would have been the certain Event, if thoſe Miracles had really been performed in *Tyre* and *Sidon.*

Beſides the Caſe was infinitely different between the *Jews* and the *Tyrians.* The former had a ſtanding Rule of Faith, whereby to receive the Knowledge of the Will of God, in the Writings of *Moſes and the Prophets*; the others wanted that advantage. The Tradition of the firſt Patriarchs, whence they alſo deſcended, had been worn out by a long Succeſſion of time; and the Notions of natural Religion

ligion had been defaced by long diſuſe; ſo that Miracles were even neceſſary to ſupply that defect, and reſtore the Knowledge of true Religion among them; and had they ſeen the mighty works of the bleſſed Jeſus, it is not improbable, but that *they would have repented in ſackcloth and aſhes.* Vol. 2.

Farther, if we conſider the common Objections, to which the ordinary method of conveying Religion long ſince ſettled without Miracles, and the extraordinary method by Miracles, are ſubject; we ſhall find them equal on both ſides. The general Objection againſt the ordinary method, is the want of abſolute Demonſtration; and even altho' Miracles ſhould be always continu'd, that ſtill would be wanting. Men deſirous to retain their Vices, in Contradiction to the Precepts of Religion, would ſtill alledge, That thoſe Miracles were no other than Illuſions, that their Senſes deceived them, or were impoſed on by Tricks and Impoſtures.

Particularly that ſort of method, which the rich Man in the Text deſired might be employed for the Converſion of his Brethren, would be of all others the moſt exceptionable; I mean the Apparition of the Spirits of deceaſed Men, aſſuring the living of the reality of another Life. It would

Vol. 2 would be impoſſible to form Rules whereby to diſtinguiſh true from imaginary Apparitions, the appearance of humane Souls from Illuſion of evil Spirits. Or if ſuch Rules could be formed; Men could never be aſſured of the Truth of what they ſhould reveal; ſince the Souls of Men put not off their Vices with the Body, and may ſtill retain ſuch Sins, as may be Exerciſed without the aſſiſtance of corporeal Organs, ſuch as Envy, Malice, Lying, and Fraud. Or if all theſe Difficulties were removed; the Terror and Affrightment attending ſuch Apparitions would infallibly hinder all clear Perception either of the reality of the Apparition, or of the Matters revealed in it.

If then, there be any here, as it is a Perjudice common to many Chriſtians, who imagines, that if he had lived in the time of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and had ſeen with his own Eyes the miraculous Works performed by them; or if God ſhould pleaſe to admoniſh him by the Admonition of ſome departed Soul, he ſhould then carefully obſerve the Precepts of Religion, and live up to the Rules of it; let him be aſſured, That he deceiveth his own Soul; that if the preſent Arguments

guments of Chriſtianity, afforded to him in the ordinary Rule, cannot induce him to the belief or practice of his Duty; neither would that extraordinary method, which he ſo much deſireth. He hath already ſufficient Motives of Conviction and Inſtruction in the Scripture, in the Exhortations of thoſe who are appointed by God for this very Office; and if he rejecteth theſe, neither would he be any more moved, altho' God ſhould ſpeak to him from Heaven. The ſame Luſts and Vices, which hinder the Efficacy of the one, would, defeat the Succeſs of the other; and even if he ſhould be ſatisfied in his fond Deſires, he would ſtill fly off, and ſeek ſome other Cloak for his Impiety. Vol. 2.

Let us rather be thankful to God for thoſe ordinary means of Inſtruction and Admonition which he hath afforded us. Let us by a right uſe of them approve our ſelves worthy of them; and then that Satisfaction and Conviction, which others may pretend they can receive alone from Miracles, Inſpirations and Apparitions, we ſhall infallibly find in *Moſes and the Prophets*; in the common methods of Salvation; in the Writings of the Holy Pen-men, and in the conſtant

Vol. 2. Instructions of the Church. This Knowledge will be raised and actuated by a careful discharge of the Duties enjoyned by it; by a frequent Conversing with those means, whereby it is communicated; by a diligent use of all those Religious Offices, and Participation of Holy Rites, whereby it may be improved. So shall what we know now certainly indeed, but not Demonstratively, be at last advanced into an absolute and perfect Demonstration, when we shall see our Lord Face to Face, and sensibly enjoy, what we now assuredly hope. *To the Fruition of this Joy, and Completion of this Hope, God of his infinite Mercy bring us all for the sake of Jesus Christ*, Amen.

The Tenth SERMON.

Preach'd on the 22d. of *December*, 1689.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

St. John VIII. 12.

I am the Light of the world. He that followeth me, ſhall not walk in darkneſs, but ſhall have the Light of Life.

AMONG all the Metaphorical Expreſſions, wherewith Chriſt is either prefigured in the Old Teſtament, or denoted in the New, none is more expreſſive of the Excellency of his Perſon, and the Nature and Deſign of his Office, than this of *Light*, which he applieth to himſelf in the Text. Nothing is more neceſſary and deſirable to Men; nothing of more univerſal influence and benefit

Vol. 2. to the whole World, than *Light*. Upon which account the moſt Glorious Deſcriptions of God, and his Effects and Benefits, are in Holy Scripture generally repreſented by the Denomination or Compariſon of *Light*. Himſelf is called by that Name. *God is light*, ſaith St. *John*, 1 Epiſt. I. 5. *and in him is no darkneſs at all.* He is termed *the Father of Lights*, by St. *James* I. 17. His Habitation, becauſe nothing more Glorious than *Light* can be conceived, is deſcribed to be *in the Light. And the Light dwelleth with him*, Dan. II. 22. *Who only hath immortality dwelling in the Light, which no man can approach unto*, 1 Tim. VI. 16. The Magnificence, and the Joys of Heaven are amplified by *the exceeding Light of it*, in Apoc. XXI. And in innumerable places of the Old Teſtament, the Joy and Comfort of Men is expreſſed by the conferring of *Light* upon them, or the Springing up of *Light* to them.

Among the Heathens, who knew little of Divine Matters, and followed the Dictates of their natural Inclinations, the Benefits of *Light* were always eſteemed ſo far to exceed all other advantages of Nature, that in chooſing to themſelves a Deity, they all betook themſelves in the firſt place

place to the Sun, that great Fountain of *Light*; and paid their Adoration to it as to the moſt beneficial of all viſible Beings. Vol. 2

Now what the Sun is to the viſible World, to the Eyes of Men, and to all corporeal Objects, which receive his Influences; the ſame is Chriſt to the Soul of Man; diſpenſing the ſame Benefits to it; producing the ſame Effects in it; diſpelling the Darkneſs of it, animating, quickning and enlivening it, enlightning and directing it; and Communicating his beneficial Influences to all who receive and follow the *Light*, which he holds out to them. All this Chriſt affirms of himſelf in the Text; the Greatneſs and Brightneſs of his *Light* in the former words: *I am the Light of the World.* And the Communication of that *Light*, and the Benefits of it to all his Followers, in the latter words: *He that followeth me ſhall not walk in darkneſs, but ſhall have the Light of Life.*

A great and eminent Character indeed to be *the Light of the World*; and which can be verified of none but that Meſſias who was to enlighten the World. Yet a Character ſo exactly agreeing to our Lord, that if there were no other Arguments to prove him the true Meſſias, this alone might Evince it.

Vol. 2. The Properties and Benefits of *Light* are to diſpel Darkneſs, and to enlighten the World, whereby Men and other Creatures may be directed in their Motions and Actions. This our Lord hath in a moſt perfect manner performed to the intellectual World, the Soul of Man; and thereby approved himſelf *the true Light of the World*; and abundantly ſatisfied thoſe ancient Propheſies, which went before concerning him; that he ſhould confer an extraordinary *Light* upon Mankind, diſpel the Darkneſs under which they laboured, and introduce a Glorious ſtate of *Light*.

He was of old prefigured by the Name of *a Star*, which ſhould *ariſe in Jacob*, But afterwards by more full and ample Significations, Iſa XLIX. 6. He is Promiſed to be given for *a Light to the Gentiles*. A Prophecy renewed by Old *Simeon*, Luk. II. 32. when at his Preſentation in the Temple he foretold, he ſhould be *a Light to lighten the Gentiles*. A Promiſe made in more than one place of the Old Teſtament. For we read alſo in the XLII. of *Iſa*. *I the Lord have called thee in righteouſneſs; and will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes*. And in the

the LX. Ch. *Ariſe, ſhine; for thy Light is come; and the Glory of the Lord is riſen upon thee. And the Gentiles, ſhall come to thy Light, and Kings to the brightneſs of thy riſing.* And of the times of the Meſſias it is foretold by the ſame Prophet, XXX. 26. *Moreover the Light of the Moon ſhall be as the Light of the Sun; and the Light of the Sun ſhall be ſeven fold as the light of ſeven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the ſtroke of their wound,* and LX. 19. *The Sun ſhall be no more thy Light by day; neither for brightneſs ſhall the Moon give Light unto thee; but the Lord ſhall be unto thee an everlaſting Light, and thy God thy Glory.* And as the Effect of all this, IX. 2. *The people, which ſate in darkneſs, ſaw great Light; and to them which ſate in the region and ſhadow of death, Light is ſprung up:* Which Prophecy St. *Matthew* obſerveth to have been exactly fulfilled by our Saviour, in the IV. 16. of his Goſpel. Vol. 2.

After ſo many Magnificent Prophēſies concerning the extraordinary Light to be brought into the World by the Meſſias; we cannot but raiſe our Apprehenſions, and expect ſomewhat more than humane Knowledge to be communicated by him

Vol. 2. to the World, ſomewhat more than humane *Light* to be diſpenſed by him. Nor ſhall we be deceived in our Expectations; the *Light* communicated by our Lord to the World is ſo univerſal in the extent, ſo reſplendent in the Nature, ſo conſtant in the Duration of it; that it in no ways falls ſhort of thoſe Glorious Predictions, which went before concerning it; and juſtly gives to our Lord the Author and Conveyer of it, the Title of *the Light of the World*: This will appear evidently; if we conſider either,

I. The Doctrine: Or

II. The Example of Chriſt: Upon both which Accounts he was *the Light of the World.*

I. Then, the Doctrine of Chriſt gave Light unto the world, by removing the Errors of it, and teaching it the Rules of Truth, which might point out the way to Happineſs.

To conceive the better the happy Effects of the Doctrines of Chriſt, let us take a view of the ſtate of the World at that time; and we ſhall find, as in the beginning, Darkneſs to have over-ſpread the face of the Earth. A very ſmall part of Mankind enjoyed the benefit of Revelation; and even they had corrupted

ed and almoſt effaced the Divine Truths revealed to them, by falſe Gloſſes and groſs Interpretations; they had forſaken *the weightier Matters of the Law*; and even thoſe who were moſt Conſcientious among them, buſied themſelves wholly in obſerving ſuch trivial Ceremonies, as themſelves had for the moſt part formed by miſtaken Interpretations. But the infinitely greater part of Mankind lived as *without God in the World*. They had intirely loſt thoſe revealed Notions, which were delivered to their Forefathers, immediately after the Deluge; and the natural Notions of Religion they had ſo far corrupted; that their Worſhip was downright Impiety, and all their religious Actions, ſo many groſs Superſtitions. In the far greater part of the World, all Notions of Morality and a Natural Law were intirely loſt; and it was a brutiſh Fear only, which kept up any ſort of Religion among them: which after all was ſuch a Religion, as was their greateſt Crime; being no other than a moſt ſtupid Idolatry. Vol. 2.

In the more polite part of the World, which retained Civility and pretended to Letters; the natural Law indeed was kept up among the more Learned of them;

Vol. 2.

them; but even by them ſo miſtaken and corrupted, that they allowed as lawful the Practice of ſome enormous Vices; which to convince of unlawfulneſs needed no more than to conſult the common Reaſon of Mankind; as Fornication, Sodomy, practiſing the Idolatrous Worſhip of the Country, although at the ſame time convinced of the Folly of it; Self-murder, and many other Vices, which the moſt refined of their Philoſophers defended to be lawful.

As for the common People, their Notions of God were ſuch as the publick Religion of the Country infuſed into them; the moſt vile and unworthy of a Deity which can be imagined, ſuch as patronized all the Crimes they could commit, provided they violated not the Laws of their Country. For by theſe Corruptions no Notion of Morality was left among them, nor any other diſtinction of Good and Evil, than what the Laws of their Country imprinted in them. They could not but imagin that ſuch Actions were good in their own Nature, which their chief Gods had practiſed; altho' their inconvenience to the publick had cauſed them to be forbidden. In a word conceive a People ignorant both

of

of God and their own Nature; deſirous of Happineſs, but knowing not where to find it, and purſuing methods directly contrary to it; groaping in Darkneſs, without the leaſt day of *Light*; and ſuch was the ſtate of the World at that time. Vol. 2.

To reſcue the World from this miſerable Darkneſs, to reſtore *Light* to the minds of Men, was a noble undertaking, and worthy the Son of God: an undertaking, which as it could be performed by none but the Son of God; ſo was it moſt happily effected by him. He ſaith of himſelf that *he came a Light into the World; that whoſoever believeth on him ſhould not abide in darkneſs*, John XII. 46. His Deſign was *to deliver us from the power of darkneſs*; as the Apoſtle aſſures us, Coloſſ. I. 13. A Deſign firſt begun by himſelf in Perſon, and afterwards carried on by the Apoſtles and their Succeſſors to this day, by his Command and through his Power: whom he ſent (as St. *Paul* deſcribes his Commiſſion, Acts XXVI. 18. *To open the eyes* (of the Gentiles or the ignorant) *and to turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Himſelf, while converſant on Earth, buſied himſelf in nothing more than in detecting

Vol. 2. detecting the falſe Explications of the Moral part of the Jewiſh Law, which was of equal Obligation to all Mankind; in diſcovering the Corruptions of it, and reſtoring it to its Primitive Integrity.

And not content only to diſcover the Errors of the World (as it was commonly objected to the Heathen Philoſophers, that they could eaſily overthrow the Opinions of one another, but could eſtabliſh no Truth in the room of them) he plainly revealed their whole Duty to them; taught them even the Principles of the Moral Law, that ſo Men might no more be ſubject to miſtake in it. To this he added the Revelation of the whole Will of God, which concerns either the Rewards or Puniſhments annexed to this Law, which might reinforce the Practice of it; or the future Felicity of Man to be obtained by the Obſervation of it; or the means of Pardon in Caſe of the Violation of it.

Nor was this *Light* to be confined to a Corner, to be appropriated to a few; it was to be made truly *the Light of the World*, to be communicated to all, to be continued to the end of the World. The eaſineſs and ſimplicity of it adapted to the Capacity and Practice of all men, fitted

ted it for ſuch an univerſal Communica- Vol. 2.
tion. And that it ſhould be actually com-
municated, he abundantly provided by proclaiming it himſelf to all while on Earth; by eſtabliſhing a numerous Order of Diſciples, who ſhould propagate it ſucceſſively to the end of the World; by inſpiring Holy Writers to commit it plainly and intirely to writing; by founding a Church, the Members of which ſhould by certain ſolemn Rites or Sacraments, oblige themſelves to the Practice of it; by contriving the Diſcipline and Government of this Church in ſuch a manner, as might beſt tend to the perpetual Continuation and Propagation of this *Light* once delivered. When therefore by theſe means in a few Centuries almoſt all the known World was *delivered from the Power of darkneſs*, freed from its ancient Errors, and received the Truth: when a conſiderable part of the World ſtill continues to enjoy the ſame Benefits, Freedom from the darkneſs of Ignorance in Divine Matters, and an exact Knowledge both of the Nature of God, as far as relates to us, our Duty to him, and way to Happineſs; may we not juſtly conclude all the Glorious Propheſies concerning the happy times of the

Vol. 2. the Messias, and the *Light* to be conferred on the World by him, to have been exactly completed in our Lord; and that in removing the Ignorance of Mankind, and restoring and increasing the Knowledge of truth among Men, he was in an eminent manner *the Light of the World.*

And so pure and unspotted, as well as clear and bright, is this light communicated by Christ unto the World; so exactly conformable to all the first Principles of Truth and Reason imprinted in the Souls of Men, or to be deduced thence; that a more clear Argument of the Truth of the Christian Religion cannot be conceived or desired. A Reflection, which may be worth our Consideration a while, as being no small Confirmation of the Excellency of that *Light*, of which we now treat.

It is impossible to conceive, that a Person devoid of all acquired Learning, as our Lord confessedly was, should in an Age over-run with universal Errors teach and deliver an entire System of Doctrine and Rule of Life, without the least Error, if he had not been directed by a Divine Power, and really acted by that Divine Commission which he pretended. It might perhaps have been accounted possible,

poſſible, if he had been brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, inſtructed in all the Learning of the Age; altho' even in that Caſe, it would have been very hardly poſſible, when the learned Men among the Jews are all known at that time to have been involved in ſo many Errors; and how groſly the learned Men among the Gentiles erred in the Rules of natural Religion we before inſtanced; and that any one Man ſhould after the Reception of his Education, from theſe very Erroneous Doctors, happily diſcover all the Errors both of Jews and Gentiles, and find out the exact Truth in all Queſtions of Morality and Religion, without the leaſt mixture of Error or miſtake, ſeems a Matter wholly incredible. But that a Perſon devoid of all Learning and external Helps ſhould effect it, is wholly impoſſible. Vol. 2.

Now it is moſt certain that in the whole Syſtem of Chriſtian Religion, and among all the Rules of Life, as delivered by Chriſt and contained in his Goſpel, not the leaſt Flaw or Error could ever be found by all the Adverſaries of it. Or if we truſt not them, let every Mans Reaſon be his Judge. Let him view all the Commands of Chriſt, and ſee if he can find any thing contrary to Reaſon, any

Vol. 2. any thing unworthy either of God or Man. An invincible Argument, that the Author of it proceeded by a Divine Commission, and derived his Knowledge from a ſupernatural Revelation.

It may not be amiſs in a few words to carry this Argument a little higher, and apply it to the Religion of the Jews, before the coming of our Lord. Where if we think rationally, we ſhall find it abſolutely impoſſible, that a People ſo barbarous as they were in the beginning, ſo devoid of all Aſſiſtances of Arts and Sciences in the whole Succeſſion of their Government, ſhould form ſuch juſt and noble Notions of a Deity, contrive a Religion without any mixture of Sin or Idolatry; unleſs they had been directed by God himſelf. View all the Nations round about, and you ſhall find them drowned in groſs Ignorance and Idolatry. And then enquire if any other Cauſe of this ſo great difference can be aſſigned. Compare their Hymns formed in Honour of God, and Books treating concerning the Nature of him, now compriſed in the Old Teſtament, with the Compoſitions formed by the Grecians or any other Learned Heathen Nation in Honour of their Gods, and with their Thelogical Writings;

writings; you will find the first to contain just and noble Thoughts of God; true Judgments concerning the Relation between God and Man; nothing which is not agreeable to the Honour and Majesty of God; nothing, which is not exactly true. Whereas in the other, you shall discover every where either childish or impious Notions of God, nothing answerable to his Majesty, and little agreeable to Truth. A difference which can never be accounted for, but by acknowledging the former to have proceeded from a Divine Direction and Inspiration.

So clear and undeniable is the force of *Light*, that it discovers it self where-ever it Acts; it cannot be hid, dissembled or stifled; and according to our Saviour's own Comparison, *like a City placed upon a Hill*, appeareth at a distance, giving direction to all far and near. And thus our Saviour was also *the Light of the World*, upon the account of the Exemplarineſs of his Life. In which Respect he tells his Disciples that *they are the Light of the World*, Matth. V. 14. giving Direction to Mankind in the practice of their Duty, by that eminent Vertue which shone forth in them, and could not but be observed by all Men. And of

Vol. 2. himſelf, John IX. 5. *As long as I am in the World, I am the Light of the World.* Not that he was wholly to ceaſe to be *the Light of the World*, even after he ſhould be removed from it: For both his Doctrine, and the Report of his Example were to enlighten the World to all Ages; but in the latter Reſpect, that of his Example; the Efficacy of it would decreaſe upon his removal from the Earth, inaſmuch as the Sight moveth more than the Fame of an illuſtrious Example.

An Example indeed ſo eminent, that whether ſeen or heard it was *a Light* to all Mankind; ſo reſplendent and remarkable, that as *the Light*, it ſtruck the Eyes of all Men, and could not but be taken Notice of; ſo juſt and adequate, that it included the whole Duty of Man in its utmoſt Perfection; and as *the Light*, directed Men in the right way. His Doctrine was the moſt exact Syſtem of all Moral and Divine Vertues, that ever was propoſed to the World. And in all this Syſtem there is no one Vertue, which himſelf poſſeſſed and exerciſed not in the moſt perfect manner. All that Piety, Temperance, Meekneſs and Charity, which he preſcribed to his Followers, himſelf practiſed in the whole Courſe of his Life. And that in a Degree which

other

other Men cannot hope to attain to, without any interruption of Vice or Imperfection. Such an Example might well be termed *the Light of the World*; in which alone, if all Rules of Piety, if all Notions of good were loſt among Men, they might be entirely recovered: And not only illuſtrious in it ſelf, but alſo induſtriouſly made ſo to all Mankind by a ſtudious Communication of the Knowledge of it. For this Purpoſe it was at firſt acted in the Cities, in the ſolemn Feaſts, and in the publick Places of *Judea*; not in a Deſert or in a Cell, not ſpent in a ſolitary Retirement or known to few. And after that, the Hiſtory of it was by the wiſe Direction of the Holy Spirit committed to Writing; whereby the knowledge of it might be conveyed to all Ages and Nations; and that *Light* which firſt aroſe and ſhone in a ſmall Corner of the World, might be diffuſed through the Univerſe, and become a general and eternal Standard of Duty to all Mankind. Vol. 2.

The Second thing propoſed to be ſpoken to were the Benefits, which this *Light* ſhould conferr upon the World, by the Communication of it: Which our Lord expreſſeth in the latter part of the Verſe, *He that followeth me, walketh not*

Vol. 2. *in darkneſs, but ſhall have the Light of Life.* And this is but a natural Conſequence; for if *the Light*, which Chriſt communicated to the World by his Doctrine and Example, were ſo illuſtrious, as we before deſcribed; it was impoſſible that any Man, who obtained the Knowledge of the one, or imitated the other, ſhould ſtill continue in *Darkneſs*, in the ſame Ignorance and Error, in which he was before involved. He had thereby his Miſtakes removed, the meaſure of his Duty aſcertained to him, and the Knowledge of ſaving Truth conveyed to him; which was the thing our Lord chiefly intended in theſe Words; where he ſpeaks of the Perfection of all neceſſary Knowledge of Divine Matters, which he would communicate to thoſe who ſhould put themſelves under his Diſcipline.

But then, there is another eaſie and practical Senſe of the words which may be of more uſe to us. *Light* and *Darkneſs* in Scripture do moſt frequently ſignifie thoſe two contrary States of Life, which ought to be led by the Profeſſors of the Goſpel, which enjoyed the Benefit of this revealed *Light*; and which was wont to be led by thoſe who formerly lived or ſtill continued in the *Darkneſs* of Gentiliſm. Hence in the New Teſta-

Teſtament, the Diſciples of the Chriſtian Religion are often called *the Children of light*; and that State of Sin and Error, from which they were converted, expreſſed by *Darkneſs*, as Epheſ. V. 8. *Ye were ſometimes darkneſs, but now are ye light; walk as the Children of light*; and in many other places. And all Sin is called *the work of Darkneſs*, as Rom. XIII. 12. *Let us caſt off the works of Darkneſs*; and Epheſ. V. 11. *Have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of Darkneſs.* Our Lord therefore in this place teacheth us; that his *true* Diſciples, they who followed the Conduct of his *Light*, walked in the right way, *caſt off the works of Darkneſs*, and were directed into, and followed *the path, which leadeth unto Life.* Vol. 2.

Many Sins to which they were before ſubject, were the effect of their Ignorance; occaſioned by the *Darkneſs* of their Mind. They knew them not to be Sins. Their Judgment, which is the natural *Light* of Man, could not direct the Will aright, or betrayed it to a wrong Choice; even when it was diſpoſed aright, and as Reaſon Wills, reſolved to follow the Direction of the Judgment. A miſerable State indeed, when Men were willing to perform their Duty, and knew it not. The unhappineſs of which

Vol. 2. our Lord fitly deſcribeth, Matth. VI. 23. *If therefore the light that is in thee be darkneſs*; (if thy Judgment be corrupted with Error or Ignorance of thy Duty;) *how great is that darkneſs?* From this unhappineſs our Saviour fully freed his Diſciples, by teaching them all neceſſary Truth, by informing their Judgment, by ſetting their Duty in a full *Light*; whereby if they would uſe any ordinary Diligence, they could not miſtake in the Knowledge and Practice of it.

Further, theſe *works of Darkneſs*, even among the Gentiles, much leſs among Chriſtians, proceeded not always from the defect of Judgment, from the Ignorance of Duty; but more ordinarily from the Corruption of the Will were acted againſt the Dictates of Conſcience, and known to be Sins while acted: Yet fitly called *the Works of Darkneſs*, becauſe (as our Lord told *Nicodemus*, John III. 20.) *Every one that doth evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, leaſt his deeds ſhould be reproved.* There is a natural Deteſtation of Sin, when known to be ſuch, in all Men; which maketh the moſt profligate Men deſire their Sins may be concealed from the knowledge of others; not conſidering perhaps (as they ſeldom give themſelves time to conſider) that

that they cannot eſcape the knowledge of God. This Corruption of the Will, which occaſions ſuch *Works of Darkneſs*, Chriſt hath alſo provided for and removed, by propoſing ſuch Arguments of Reward and Puniſhment, as if ſeriouſly reflected on, cannot fail to perſwade; by rectifying the Judgment, and thereby influencing the Will. For beſides the external Arguments of our Obligation to God, and our own Intereſt concerned in it; every part of our Duty, when rightly underſtood, carrieth internal and powerful Arguments of Perſwaſion with it.

Further, this Sentence of Chriſt may be of uſe to us, to the diſcovering the true Followers of Chriſt, and to the making a right Eſtimate of our own as well as others Relation to Chriſt. For as *he that followeth this Light, cannot walk in Darkneſs*, ſo it is impoſſible that he who walketh in *Darkneſs* ſhould follow this *Light*. It was formerly the *Condemnation* of the Jews; *that Light came into the World, and Men loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil.* They retained their Infidelity, and rejected the Doctrine of Chriſt, becauſe contrary to their beloved Luſts and Vices. And it is now the Condemnation of as

Vol. 2. many Chriſtians, that profeſſing *to follow the Light*, they ſtill *walk in Darkneſs*; that in the midſt of all that Knowledge, which by Chriſtianity is conferred to them, they practiſe the ſame Vices, which the Gentiles and Infidels were guilty of, betrayed to them by their Ignorance and Blindneſs: Who nevertheleſs call themſelves the Sons of *Light*, pretend to be the Diſciples of the Author of it, and to have a near Relation to him. Of ſuch St. *John* hath pronounced, 1 *John* I. 6. *If we ſay that we have fellowſhip with him, and walk in darkneſs, we lie and do not the truth.*

And indeed if the *Light* of Heaven was not intended only to gaze upon, and pleaſe the Eyes of Men; if much leſs the *Light* of the Soul, the Doctrine and Truth revealed by Chriſt, was not intended merely to promote the Speculations, and gratifie the Fancies of Men; if a rational and vertuous Conduct of Life be the natural Effect of a ſound Judgment and accurate Knowledge of Duty, and the Arguments enforcing it; it is but a natural Conſequence that this *Light*, whereſoever it is found, ſhould exert and diſcover it ſelf in Actions conformable to it. But it is abſurd to pretend that *Light* hath there any influence, where *the works*

works of Darkneſs are performed; or that two ſuch Contraries can conſiſt together. Let us rather give thanks to God, who hath ſent this Glorious *Light* into the World; and then *hath called us out of darkneſs into this marvellous light*; hath reſcued us from the former Darkneſs and Ignorance, and clearly revealed to us all neceſſary Truths. Let us ſecure to our ſelves, and improve the Benefits of this *Light*, by *invariably* following the Directions of it; ſo ſhall it become to us (what our Lord promiſeth in the Text) *the Light of Life.* Vol. 2.

The

The Eleventh SERMON.

Preach'd on the 9th. of *February*, $16\frac{89}{90}$.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

1 Peter IV. 18.

And if the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?

THAT Chriſtianity is no lazy Profeſſion, that the Acquiſition of Salvation is no eaſie Undertaking, our Lord hath endeavoured to convince us, by thoſe many Precepts of watching and conſtant Preparation to receive him, whenſoever he ſhould call us to Judgment; by thoſe many Parables, which tend to the ſame Deſign; by thoſe frequent Predictions of Perſecutions, Hatred and Tribulation, which ſhould attend his faithful Diſciples. But in no place are we preſſed to Vigilance and Diligence by a more cogent Argu-

Argument than in theſe words, which reach all ſorts of Men both thoſe who earneſtly deſire and purſue Salvation; and thoſe who either not deſire it, or with the deſire of it retain thoſe Sins, which are manifeſtly Deſtructive of it. Vol. 2.

To increaſe the Diligence of the former, they are told, that *the Righteous*, are not without extreme Difficulty, are *ſcarcely ſaved*. And to confound the vain hopes of the latter, or force them to change their vicious Courſe of Life, if they will with any appearance of Succeſs continue their Deſire of Happineſs, they are aſſured that even the *Righteous* are but hardly ſaved; and then certainly no Hopes of Salvation can be left for them. To enforce this Argument upon each ſort of Men, is the Deſign of the words in the Text; and ſhall be alſo of my Diſcourſe.

I. Then, of the Difficulty of Salvation even to *the Righteous*, with the Reaſons and the Juſtice of it. The Reaſons of it were many of them peculiar to the Chriſtians of that time, when St. *Peter* writ, and affect not us. Others are peculiar to us, and concerned not them; and many common to both. I begin with the firſt; the Knowledge of which will alſo ſhew the occaſion and dependance of the Text and Context.

1. Of

Vol. 2. 1. Of the Difficulties peculiar to the Chriſtians of thoſe times. The Principal intended by the Apoſtle in this place, was the Perſecution to be brought upon them, by the Jews and other Enemies of Chriſtianity. He had prepared them for the patient enduring of this Perſecution, both in this and in the precedent Chapter, by the Prediction of it, by the Example of Chriſt, by the Promiſe of Reward, by the certainty of Revenge to be executed by God upon their Perſecutors: Calls it *a fiery Tryal* in the 12th. Verſe; tells them in the 16th. Verſe, that it ſhould be raiſed againſt them for this very Reaſon, that they were *Chriſtians*; ſubjoyns in the 17th. Verſe, *for the time is come, that Judgment muſt begin at the houſe of God.* The time now drew near, that the Predictions of Chriſt concerning the Deſtruction of the Jews were to be accompliſhed. But our Lord had alſo foretold in the XIII. Chap. of St. *Matthew*, and the XXI. of St. *Luke*, that this Deſtruction of the Jews ſhould be preceded by a fierce Perſecution of the Chriſtians, *who ſhould be hated by all Men for his names ſake*; ſhould be *betrayed* by their neareſt Relations through a blind Zeal; driven from *one City to another*, *delivered up* to be afflicted and killed: An Affliction ſo great, *as never*

ver was ſince the beginning of the World, no nor ever ſhall be; as himſelf ſaith, Matth. XXIV. 21. Inſomuch *as many ſhould be offended*, and Apoſtatize from the Faith; and if God did not in Mercy ſhorten thoſe days, an univerſal Defection might poſſible enſue. This was that Judgment then, which St. *Peter* ſaith ſhould *begin at the houſe of God*; ſhould cauſe that *the Righteous ſhould ſcarcely be ſaved*; ſhould ſhock their Faith, and almoſt extinguiſh their Hope; or if both Faith and Hope continued, ſhould tempt them to prefer the eaſe and quiet of the World to them both. Vol. 2.

Men are apt to diſtruſt the Providence, and ſometimes even to disbelieve the Being of God, when they ſee wickedneſs Triumphant in the World, Injuſtice unpuniſhed, and Innocence oppreſſed, without any extraordinary Interpoſition or apparent regard of God. This Argument hath made all the Atheiſts of former and latter Ages; and when it was ſo ſignally viſible, as in thoſe dreadful Times, we cannot wonder, that it ſhould ſtagger the Faith of many. In taking that Profeſſion on them, they believed themſelves to be, and were indeed the Elect of God; choſen out of the reſt of Mankind to receive the peculiar Favours of God. When upon

Vol. 2. upon their first Entrance instead of present Advantages, they were encountred with all the Miseries and Afflictions, which a subtle and powerful Enemy could bring upon them: Such Discouragements could not but deterr from the Prosecution of their Duty many of these new Converts, who by their Education and preconceived Opinions were ill prepared to withstand such fierce Assaults.

The Jews having been brought up in Expectation of temporal Rewards and a powerful Messias, who far from the subjecting them to their Enemies, should put the whole world under their Command: And the Gentiles having been wont freely to indulge themselves in all the Satisfactions of Sense and Pleasure: To bring off the one from these Prejudices, and the other from this Ease and Luxury, to follow a Crucified Saviour, not only in the belief of his Doctrines, but also in the imitation of his Sufferings; to exchange the Pleasures of the World, and the Hopes of earthly Happiness, for all those Calamities, which our Lord foretold, and daily experience did then confirm, to be a necessary Consequence of belief in him; must certainly have been such a Difficulty, as could be surmounted but by few.

If we should even remove those Disadvantages

advantages of Education and Cuſtom, and ſuppoſe a ſerious belief of the Doctrine and the Promiſes of Chriſt, an earneſt deſire of Salvation, and an hearty Endeavour to attain it; yet are we not ſecured againſt the force of ſuch violent Temptations, as are the Effects of a Perſecution. It is not every Man, not an ordinary Soul, that can ſurmount the Fears of Death, and without Aſtoniſhment await the Execution; when the renouncing of a mere Opinion, of an inviſible Intereſt can prevent it. It is a Reſolution of a far higher Nature, than what the World generally accounteth Courage; which is commonly no more than the effect of Paſſion, and is ſtill maintained by the Hopes of Succeſs, and the Proſpect of ſome viſible Intereſt. When therefore, the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity retained their Faith with the univerſal Hatred of all Men, with the probable Loſs of their Fortunes, and even of their Lives, as it was highly generous, ſo it was extreamly difficult to retain a good Conſcience, and therewith the Hopes of Salvation. Vol. 2.

This was a Difficulty indeed ſo great, that your own Imagination will amplifie it more than any words I can uſe for that Purpoſe. If it ſeem ſtrange to us, that God ſhould ſuffer his choſen Servants to be

Vol. 2. be thus afflicted and exposed to the Insults of wicked Men; we must reflect upon the Condition of those Christians, before they entred upon the Profession of Christianity: That the far greater part of them had spent their Lives in the open Exercise of all those Sins, to which the Temptations of the World, the Flesh or the Devil could incite them; and that without any remorse of Conscience, or intervals of Piety. This the Apostle chargeth them with, in the 3d. Verse of this Chapter. It was incongruous to the Divine Justice, to suffer such enormous Sinners wholly to escape unpunished; and therefore his infinite Wisdom so ordered the state of the World, and of the Church at that time, that they should undergo sharp Afflictions and Persecutions in this Life; that so without any Diminution of his Justice he might receive them to Mercy in another World. Not that the most Glorious Martyrs have been the greatest Sinners, or that temporal Calamities do always attend the Sins of the Faithful. But as in a general Persecution brought upon the Church for the precedent Sins of the greater part of it, it would have been unreasonable for any particular Men, altho' not Partakers of the Sin, to have requir'd to have been excused from partaking

king in the general Calamity: So neither may we flatter our ſelves, that we are more righteous than thoſe firſt Chriſtians were before their Converſion, for this Reaſon only, becauſe we are not puniſhed in the ſame viſible manner; but ought rather to fear, that a far greater Puniſhment is reſerved to us hereafter; if by a timely and hearty Repentance we prevent not the Execution of it. Vol. 2.

This precedent ſinful Courſe of Life was another great Difficulty to the Chriſtians of thoſe days, who had contracted before their Converſion long and fixed habits of Vice; effaced by diſuſe all Notions of natural Religion and Honeſty; which to reſtore could be the work of nothing leſs than an extraordinary Diligence and Application. If to theſe peculiar Difficulties of thoſe Times, we add the common Difficulties of Chriſtianity, we ſhall ſoon perceive what juſt Reaſon the Apoſtle had to ſay, That *the Righteous are ſcarcely ſaved.*

I will not here inſiſt upon the Difficulty of particular Duties, the depraved Nature of Man, and the Solicitations of evil Spirits, with many other diſadvantages of Piety, which we experience and lament. That which chiefly deſerveth to be conſidered, is the ſpiritual

Vol. 2. Nature, and Futurity of the Reward proposed by it. Man, in almost all the Actions of Life, is inured to follow the Perceptions of Sense, which are easily formed and affect the mind without any precedent Preparation of it. He is assured of the Existence and certainty of those Objects, which Sense presenteth to him, without entring into a serious Inquiry, or forming any Conclusions by the strength of his own Understanding. Whereas the Rewards proposed by Christianity being purely spiritual, and Men not put into the present Possession of them, they cannot obtain nor yet conceive them without a regular proceeding of Judgment. They must first consider the Nature of God, his Dignity, Power, and other Attributes; their own dependence on him; the Manifestation of his Will, and the Contrariety of their own Actions to it; the necessity of Repentance; the certain Immortality of their Soul, and the possible Immortality of their Body; the assurance of both, from him who can perform it and *cannot lie*; and the end for which such Immortality shall be conferred; to receive then the Reward or Punishment of the good or bad Conduct of this Life. All this must be first considered and examined

ned, before any Conviction can be formed of the truth of Chriſtianity. Vol. 2.

And when the Mind is thus convinced, there wants a ſecond Series of Thoughts to convince Mankind, that to embrace this Truth is their real Intereſt. The Rewards propoſed by it are chiefly ſpiritual, they affect not the Senſes, nor ſtrike the Imagination, by which Man is wont to meaſure the fruition of all Pleaſures. He reliſheth but little the Pleaſures and ſatisfaction of the Mind, he ſcarce knoweth wherein they conſiſt: And that which draweth neareſt to it in this Life, the Conception and Meditation of intellectual Objects, he finds himſelf ſoon weary of it, or perhaps is wholly unacquainted with it. And when all theſe diſadvantages are overcome, here is ſtill required another train of Thoughts, to fix the Mind in a conſtant Expectation of the Reward, notwithſtanding the beſtowing of it is deferred till another Life.

If then ſo much Conſideration be required to render the Arguments of Chriſtianity effectual; if the Nature of the Reward be ſo hardly conceived, ſo far removed from preſent Fruition, and ſo little grateful to thoſe Organs of Senſe, by which Men are wont to judge of the Ex-

Vol. 2. cellency of Fruition; it may eaſily be foreſeen, that the Promiſes of the Goſpel will loſe their Efficacy upon the greater part of Men.

For how ſmall a part of Mankind allow their Souls to entertain any Conceptions beyond what Senſe adminiſtreth to them? How few ever entertain a Thought of immaterial Beings or ſpiritual Intereſts? Not that any extraordinary ſtrength of Mind is required to form ſuch Thoughts and Convictions. The Providence of God hath ſo ordered it, that theſe things are brought home to every Man's underſtanding, and frequently urg'd upon them. It is only required of them, that they would retain ſuch Thoughts, improve them, and Act upon them. But even this is irkſome to his depraved Nature, he ſeeth and feels his Body, his Soul he little knows; the Pleaſures of the Body are always preſent to him, the nobleſt Pleaſures of the Soul are removed at a mighty diſtance. He is convinced of the one by his own Experience, for the other he muſt rely upon the aſſurance of Reaſon. And this diſadvantage betrays him either to neglect the Conſideration of the Intereſts of the Soul, or to prefer the Concerns of the Body before them, unleſs by frequent Medi-

Meditation, and diligent Attention, he hath formed a full Conviction both of the Truth and the value of them; that as they will certainly follow the performance of the Conditions preſcribed by the Goſpel, ſo even the Reverſion of them is infinitely more to be eſteemed than the preſent Poſſeſſion of all corporeal Pleaſures. Vol. 2.

Another Difficulty alike common to all, ſs the Extenſiveneſs of the Duty required: That it includeth every Action of Man; and that the defect of any one part deſtroyeth the benefit of the whole; that it is not ſufficient to exerciſe this or that Vertue in the higheſt degree, unleſs the whole Life be uniform, and deficient in none of the parts of it. Which putteth a Chriſtian upon his conſtant Guard, leaſt he ſhould at any time be ſurprized. And ſurely a Surprize is hard to be avoided, where ſo many paſſages muſt be guarded; when the Enemy may enter in by the Senſes or Imagination, by the Operation of external Objects, or the ſuggeſtion of internal Thoughts; and all theſe as numerous and various, as are the Objects from whence they proceed, or about which they are imployed. Scarce in the beſt of Men may we not diſcover ſome Paſſion predominant to the reſt; and which might he be allowed to indulge,

Vol. 2. he would confidently undertake for the good Behaviour of all the reſt. But this Liberty Chriſtianity denieth to him, injoyneth him an univerſal Conqueſt of all his Paſſions, a general performance of the whole Will of God; forbids the Omiſſion of any one Duty, upon Pain of incurring the Guilt of all. And this is truly ſo great a Difficulty, that we need not ſeek any farther Reaſons, why the beſt Chriſtians of all Ages are but hardly ſaved.

I proceed to the Difficulties peculiar to the latter Ages of Chriſtianity, and which more nearly concern us. I will mention but two: 1. The want of an univerſal Example; and 2. The want of Miracles. By theſe the ancient Chriſtians converted the Heathen World; and through want of theſe we are almoſt returned to Heatheniſm.

It could not but be a powerful Argument of Vertue to all ingenious Men when they could not ſo much as retain the Character they had undertaken without a diligent Exerciſe of Piety; when to be a vicious Chriſtian was to be a Monſter in the account of the World; when Vice was a Singularity and Diſſent from all others of the ſame Denomination. Whereas in latter Ages the whole hath been inverted, the Character univerſally

verſally retained without any regard to the Conditions of it. A pious Chriſtian muſt diſſent in the Courſe of his Life from the greater part of the Chriſtian World, and Vertue is become a Singularity: inaſmuch as, what cannot be ſufficienly lamented, many ingenuous Minds have been betrayed to ſin, to which otherwiſe they were not inclined, leaſt they ſhould appear uncivil and moroſe. And when unlawful Cuſtoms can acquire the Eſteem of Civilities among Chriſtians, we cannot but confeſs an extreme Degeneracy of the true Spirit of Chriſtianity. Vol. 2.

It may truly be ſaid of Examples in general, that they have more influence upon the greater part of Mankind, than Reaſons or Arguments. Men of ordinary Capacities (ſuch as make up the Body of Chriſtendom) take their meaſures of Chriſtianity, from the Practice of the Profeſſors of it; as Men do of the Laws of any Countrey, from the Practice of the Courts of Juſtice; and will hardly be perſwaded that Chriſtianity is ſo ſevere and ſerious a Matter, when they perceive the far greater part of Chriſtians trifle with it. It is natural for Men to hope for impunity in a multitude; to fall into impiety, when no ſhame reſtrains them, when a prevailing Example leads them. As for Men of

Vol. 2. more raiſed Underſtandings, it is impoſſible they ſhould thus deceive themſelves about the Obligation of their Religion; yet even thoſe eſcape not this univerſal Contagion; they fear to be accounted ſingular, are forced to diſſemble and perhaps at laſt to ſtifle their Knowledge; as not being able to withſtand the force of ſuch a mighty Torrent.

This Difficulty receives yet farther Aggravation, if we reflect that it proceeds from our own Guilt; that our ſelves are the Authors of it. The Difficulties of the Apoſtolick Age were purely extraneous, for which thoſe Chriſtians were not accountable. They brought not their Perſecutions upon themſelves, and their Sins committed before Converſion could not afterwards be juſtly imputed to them as Chriſtians. Whereas this diſadvantage, we now complain of, is the Effect of our Sins committed in the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, to which every one of us have contributed ſomewhat; and beſides the internal Guilt of the Crime committed, have upon that account increaſed our ſin. The Senſe of which ought to be a Motive to us to endeavour, by the Exemplarineſs of our future Conduct, I will not ſay, to remove this Difficulty, and retrieve the glorious Exam-

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ple of former times, (for that can ſcarce be hoped) but to compenſate the Injury which we have done to the Chriſtian Religion, by our ſinful Deportment. Vol. 2.

The other diſadvantage of the preſent Age, which I mentioned, the want of Miracles, cannot indeed be aſcribed to any Fault of ours, nor yet be retrieved by us. Yet a ſenſible diſadvantage it muſt be acknowledged; when we compare our ſelves with former times, whoſe Faith and Zeal were conſtantly awakened, kept up, and enlivened by the frequent ſight of Miracles; which confirmed to them the Truth of what they had received, the certainty of what they expected, and the Power and the favour of that God they worſhipped. But I wave the farther Conſideration of this Difficulty, becauſe the removal of it is not in our Power. Yet this uſe we may make of it, to take occaſion from it to reflect upon the infinite Goodneſs and moſt Wiſe Providence of God, which hath ſo contrived the advantages and diſadvantages of former and latter Ages, that both of them have very near equal Aſſiſtances and Difficulties in the Proſecution of their Duty: that ſo he might without derogation to his Juſtice, perform what our Lord Promiſeth in the Parable of the Houſholder

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Vol. 2. in the XX. of St. *Matthew*, *reward thoſe whom he hath called in the eleventh hour, equally with thoſe* whom he had hired in the Morning, *who had born the heat and burden of the day*; which the Fathers generally expound of this very Caſe.

For now thoſe whom he called firſt, who underwent ſuch grievous Afflictions and fierce Perſecutions for the defence of the Faith, cannot juſtly complain, that we are equally rewarded with them, who endured none of thoſe Calamities.

The Church indeed in latter Ages hath enjoyed Peace and Quiet, hath not maintained the Faith of Chriſt with the expence of her Blood; ſo neither doth ſhe enjoy thoſe Miracles, with the ſight of which they were Bleſſed. The remembrance of the eminent Example, the Miracles and the Sufferings of our Lord, were yet freſh in the minds of Men: the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt were every where Conſpicuous; the Apoſtles yet alive, who ſpoke and writ by the immediate impulſe of God; and even after their death, the ſame Gifts and Miracles were continued, till Peace was given to the Church. All theſe advantages we want, which they enjoyed; Peace and Security we have, which was denied to them. If we proceed in the Com-

Compariſon; we want alſo that glori- Vol. 2.
ous Example of univerſal Piety, which
ſhone forth in their Days. But then on the other ſide we enter not upon the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity with the ſame Prejudices and Habits of Vice, with which they did. They felt not the miſchief of an ill Example prevailing among Chriſtians: So neither did they enjoy the benefit of a Chriſtian Education. Thus God hath moſt wiſely in all Ages made the Aids and Difficulties of Chriſtianity to be equal. I wiſh I could add, that the Effects were alſo equal.

And as we admire the Wiſdom of God herein; ſo muſt we acknowledge his Juſtice alſo. It may perhaps ſeem too ſevere, that Salvation, the ſupreme Happineſs of Man ſhould be rendred thus difficult to him; that God ſhould invite us to it, and then by ſo many Difficulties exclude us from it. To this it is eaſie to reply, that Salvation is purely the Gift of God, which, as ſuch, he might beſtow upon whatſoever Conditions himſelf pleaſed. Nor in requiring ſo many, ſuch laborious and difficult Duties of us, hath he raiſed the Price (I mean the Conditions) above the worth of it. It is the ſupreme end of Man, the utmoſt Improvement of his Felicity.

Now

Vol. 2. Now look into the Writings of all Philoſophers; conſult the common Voice of Mankind; they do all confeſs, that the ſupreme end of Man not only ought to be his chief Deſign, but alſo can be obtained at no leſs Expence, than his utmoſt Diligence, the conſtant and moſt exquiſite Operations of all the Faculties of his Mind: that it muſt be the buſineſs of his whole Life. Look into your own Actions and daily Experience, and ſee whether any thing deſirable in this Life, even as your ſelves value it, be not attended with a proportionable Difficulty. And then Confeſs, that God hath done no more than what the Nature of things required, when he annexed ſo many Difficulties to the Acquiſition of Salvation.

The ſecond Part of my propoſed Deſign, I mean the Conſequence raiſed in the Text, *If the righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner appear?* is ſo evident, that I need ſay little to it. For if after the Conqueſt of ſo many Difficulties, ſo many Afflictions endured, and Labours employed, a righteous Man doth but very hardly obtain Salvation; ſurely no hopes can be left for him, who affrighted by theſe Difficulties, gives himſelf to the Conduct of his own unruly Luſts, to the practice of Vices directly contrary

contrary to the means propoſed to obtain this ultimate Happineſs. Vol. 2.

This Reaſon aſſureth, and the common Notions of the Divine Juſtice confirmeth to us, not only that the ungodly and the Sinner ſhall miſs of that excellent Reward, which ſhall be rendred to the Labour and Diligence of the Righteous; but alſo ſhall draw upon himſelf the Wrath of God, and the conſequence of it extreme Miſery, in Puniſhment of his Sin. Which is more clearly expreſſed in the *Proverbs* XI. 31. from whence theſe words of St. *Peter* are word for word, taken according to the Septuagint Tranſlation: But in the Original, according to our Tranſlation they run thus. *Behold the righteous ſhall be recompenced in the earth; much more the wicked and the ſinner.* That is, ſince God ſuffers not the failings of the *Righteous* to paſs unpuniſhed, but corrects and chaſtiſeth them in this World, with ſenſible Afflictions; much more hath he reſerved the extremity of Torment for the wicked and the ſinner. As in this place of St. *Peter*, God thought fit to chaſtiſe the former Sins of the convert Chriſtians, with a fierce and terrible Perſecution: from whence the Apoſtle draweth a like Conſequence in the 17th. Verſe. *And if judg-*

Vol. 2. *judgment first begin at the house of God; what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?*

And as the Doctriue so the Examples also of the Old and new Testament agree herein. Wherein we find, that God inflicted temporal Calamities upon his most beloved Servants, in Punishment of their Sins, even of inadvertency; that he might teach us, not to expect any Pardon for a wilful obstinacy and continuance in Impiety. Thus *Moses*, who had this Testimony from God himself that *he was faithful in all his house*, yet for some slight appearance only of distruct of the Divine Power, in bringing forth waters out of the Rock, was excluded the Enjoyment of the Promised Land; altho' an ancient Writer aggravates the sin of *Moses* from hence, that in all that frequent and familiar Converse, which he afterwards had with God, he is never found to have begged Pardon for his Sin. But however that be, we must all Confess, that the best of us have far exceeded *Moses* both in the number and the weight of our sins, and ought therefore much more to fear the Execution of the Divine Justice.

Afterwards, we read that God proposed to *David the Man after his own heart*, the

the choice of three Signal Calamities, only in Puniſhment of a light Vain-Glory, manifeſted in his Deſign of numbring his Subjects. For the ſame failure, he threatned good King *Hezekiah* with the deprivation and carrying away of his Treaſures; and ſent the great Apoſtle St. *Paul a thorn in the fleſh*, (ſome bodily Infirmity) *the Meſſenger of Satan to buffet him.* And if God excuſed not theſe great and excellent Perſons from Puniſhment, for ſuch ſmall Offences, with what reaſon can we promiſe Impunity to our ſelves? Do we Fancy our ſelves more dear to God, or more righteous, than they were? Surely no. Rather, if they were not ſaved without ſome Difficulty, we ſhall not without the moſt extreme hazard: and this altho' we did with earneſt Study and ſincere Endeavours apply our ſelves to attain Salvation; altho' we were worthy, which be it far from us to arrogate to our ſelves, to be ranged among thoſe, who in the Text are call'd *Righteous*. Vol. 2.

But of the *ungodly* and the *ſinners* what ſhall I ſay? But that if the *Righteous ſcarcely* be admitted to Mercy, they are wholly excluded from it. To them, as the Author to the *Hebrews* ſaith, Chapter X. 27. *There remaineth only a certain fearful*

Vol. 2. *ful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.* Yet we find that the moſt profligate Chriſtians do flatter themſelves with the hopes of Salvation, and upon Confidence of it proceed ſecurely in a vicious Courſe of Life. For I am perſwaded, that there are very few Chriſtians who are not convinced of the truth of the Religion they profeſs, whenſoever they give their Minds leave to reflect upon it. Only they put the Thoughts of it far from them; and whenſoever either the workings of their own Minds, or the admonition of others repreſent to them the Obligation of it, they render both unſucceſsful through a vain Hope, which they took up upon they Know not what Reaſons, that they are in the number of the ſaved.

To this fooliſh Perſwaſion many Cauſes may contribute; a conſtant and happy Succeſs in the World; too great an Opinion of the Endowments either of Body or Mind, or whatſoever may ariſe in Man a Conceit of his own worth; a ſtrong Imagination; a falſe Notion of the Mercy and the Juſtice of God; or an unhappy illuſion derived from the Teachers of abſolute Predeſtination. All theſe and many other Cauſes may contribute to this fatal Error, notwithſtanding

ing the Scripture hath particularly provided againſt it; notwithſtanding the meaneſt Capacity cannot but conclude, that if God taketh ſo ſevere an account of the Actions of the *Righteous*; if he always noteth, and oft-times puniſheth their ſmalleſt Failures; if with all their Care and Vigilance, their Mortification and Circumſpection, they are but *hardly ſaved*; it is abſurd to hope that Heaven will open to them, who have lived remiſly and ſecurely, have betrayed their Profeſſion, and by an impenitent Perſeverance in Sin have diſhonoured the Author of Salvation, and rebelled againſt the Author of their Being. Vol. 2.

From what I have ſaid, it doth appear what great Reaſon there is that thoſe, who are careful of their Salvation, ſhou'd continue and increaſe their Care; and that thoſe who are negligent of it, ſhould ſhake off their Stupidity, and apply themſelves with their utmoſt Diligence to the Acquiſition of it. The difficulty of Salvation ought neither to diſcourage the good nor affright the bad. The Worth and Happineſs of it infinitely countervaileth all the Labour which can be employed about it: Nor will the loſs of it be a mere Deprivation, a State of inſenſibility; but the beginning of ex-

Vol. 2. ceeding and endleſs Torments. The Conſideration therefore of the Difficulties, which attend it, ought to confirm the Diligent, and awaken the Negligent; to increaſe the Reſolution of the one, and expel the Remiſneſs of the other; that ſo the one may continue his Courſe ſo well begun; the other may find the right way to Happineſs, and enter into it. *God Grant, that what I have now ſaid, may be of uſe to both.*

The

The Twelfth SERMON.

Preach'd on the 23d. of *February*, $16\frac{89}{90}$.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Matth. XI. 30.

For my Yoke is easie, and my Burden is light.

NOT to trouble you with the various Interpretations of *Yoke* and *Burden* in the Text, and the Distinction made by some between them; I suppose the peculiar Scope of the words to be a Recommendation of the Christian Religion, from the easiness of its Precepts, and agreeableness of its Constitution.

All Systems of Religion, whether Natural or Revealed, may be fitly expressed by the Metaphors of *a Yoke* and *Burthen*,

Vol. 2. inaſmuch as they reſtrain the Actions of Man, limit them to certain Rules, impoſe upon him the Practice of ſome, and Abſtinence from other Actions, which otherwiſe he ſhould not have regarded, and uſed them as indifferent; which demonſtrates their Subjection to God the Author of ſuch Religion, as fully as *a Yoke* doth the Subjection of Beaſts to their Poſſeſſors, or of Captives to their Conquerors.

Yet this difference ought to be obſerved, that however the latter may be repined at with ſome ſhew of Reaſon, as being the Deprivation of precedent Liberty; the former is no more than the reſult and neceſſary Conſequence of humane Nature; which deriving its Being from God, doth upon that account owe abſolute Subjection to him; and enjoying the uſe of Freewill, is capable of receiving and practiſing ſuch Rules of Conduct, as the Sovereign Lawgiver ſhall appoint.

So that altho' in the former Caſe it may be oft-times lawful to caſt off *the Yoke*, or at leaſt deſire the removal of it; yet in this Caſe it is no more reaſonable to deny Subjection, than to receive any advantage, and yet refuſe to perform the Condition of it.

While Men therefore put any value upon

upon the benefit of Life and Being, it is but juſt that they ſhould receive it with thoſe inſeparable Burdens, which it pleaſed the Author of it to annex to it; ſuch as Subjection to himſelf, and obedience to his Laws. Vol. 2.

And as natural Religion may upon this account be truly called *a Yoke*; ſo much more all inſtituted Religions. Wherein the Profeſſors of it, beſide the natural and common Reaſons of Subjection to God, do in a peculiar manner, and for ſome more particular Reaſons put themſelves under the Command and Direction of God, and teſtifie their Subjection, by ſolemn Profeſſions and ſome external Rites.

The Jews did therefore fitly expreſs the whole Obligation of their Law by the Denomination of a *Yoke*; and whoſoever became a Proſelyte to it, was ſaid to take *the Yoke* of God upon them; and Men who denied all Obedience to God, either in their Opinion or Practice, were called Men of *Belial*, that is Men without *a Yoke*.

In Compliance to this received form of Speech among them, our Lord alſo calls his Religion *a Yoke*, and confeſſeth the Precepts of it to be *a Burden*. But then as well to diſtinguiſh it from other

Vol. 2. Religions, whether Natural or Jewiſh, as to encourage Mankind to take that *Yoke* upon them; he aſſureth them that his *Yoke is eaſie*, and his *Burden light*. In purſuance of which Deſign, I ſhall treat of the Words.

I. Comparatively, as this Deſcription of the *Yoke* or Religion of Chriſt diſtinguiſheth it from all other Religions. And

II. Abſolutely, as it implieth the Precepts of it, taken either ſeparately or all together to be *eaſie* of Practice, and not grievous to be undergone.

The Eaſineſs and Gentleneſs of his Religion above all others, our Lord intimates in his whole Diſcourſe preceding this final Sentence. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt:* In the 28th. Verſe. Which ſuppoſeth Men to have been oppreſſed, and even to have yielded under the weight of their Burdens, to have been ſo far from receiving any Satisfaction or complacency therein, that they grew weary of them; ſought for reſt and relief, and afflicted themſelves with the ſenſe of the want of it. And ſurely not without Reaſon.

For to begin with *the Yoke* of Natural Religion; that could not but be very grievous, when no proſpect of Reward appeared

appeared to the Conſcientious Obſervers of it. Vol. 2.

It is the hopes of ſome good to be obtained by it, which excites the Diligence of Man; and the Continuation of thoſe hopes will ſupport him under all Difficulties. Nothing leſs than the proſpect of ſome excellent Reward could encourage the Soul of Man to break through all the Temptations of the World; to maintain a conſtant and vigorous War againſt the Luſts of the Body, to afflict it ſelf with continual carefulneſs, and enter upon all the Difficulties of a vertuous Life. When no Reward therefore is promiſed; when the Supreme Happineſs is, if not unknown, yet at leaſt uncertain; as they wanted an effectual Motive to the Practiſe of Vertue; ſo the very Ignorance of true Happineſs was none of their leaſt Anxieties.

They found themſelves to be capable of more noble Enjoyments, than what their Senſes could preſent to them, and they could not ſtifle the reſtleſs Deſires of this Happineſs. They ſat themſelves to enquire after it, framed nice Syſtems and ſubtle Definitions of it; yet all their Labour ended in empty and uncertain Notions. What a continual Vexation was

Vol. 2. it then to the Soul of Man, to consider
S 2 that they were capable of great Improvments of Felicity, and yet knew not either wherein they consisted, or how they might be obtained. To view the extent of their Duty, the many and laborious Vertues, which were required of them, and yet to be unsatisfied to what Purpose all this tended, or wherein they should receive any advantage by it. They could not but conclude indeed, that the Justice of God did require a Discrimination of the good and bad: But then it did not appear, that because the bad were to be Punished, the good must be Rewarded with any supernatural Favours. It was a sufficient Reward to Man for his Obedience to the Divine Laws, that he had received his Being and all the Benefits of his Life from God, and enjoyed them upon no other Condition.

Or if an extraordinary Reward might be reasonably hoped for from the Consideration of the Divine Justice, yet could no Man in that State conceive an Assurance of his Title to it; since no such Reward could be claimed but upon account of an absolute and most perfect Obedience; and every one was Conscious to himself, that he could not put in any such Claim. Lastly, to remove all this Anxiety,

Anxiety, it was not ſufficient to renounce all hopes of future or ſupernatural Happineſs, and live regardleſs of it. For the natural Reaſon of Man would ſtill ſuggeſt to him, that this was his Duty, and that was unlawful to him. If he ſlighted the Suggeſtions; his Conſcience would afflict and torment him, would upbraid him with it, and cauſe him to condemn himſelf. If he endeavoured to ſtifle theſe Suggeſtions, he would find it to be impoſſible; and if he could effect it, he muſt conceive himſelf to be reduced to the State and Condition of a Beaſt. Upon the whole, the Mind of Man could not but labour with great Anxieties, grow reſtleſs and impatient under the Burden of Natural Religion, and be thereby neceſſitated to betake it ſelf to the direction of Chriſt, who promiſeth *Reſt* and Satisfaction to it. Vol. 2.

But our Lord, in this place, more particularly referreth to the ſeverity of the Jewiſh Diſpenſation; a Religion encumbred with ſo many Rites and Ceremonies, ſo many poſitive Precepts and Obſervations, that St. *Peter* juſtly complaineth of it in *Acts* XV. 10. as of *a Yoke, which neither their Fathers nor themſelves were able to bear.* Nor indeed was it at firſt intended to perfect the Nature of Mankind,

Vol. 2. Mankind, or immediately to procure Happineſs, but rather to guard that ſtiff-necked People from the ſin of Idolatry, to which they were ſo ſtrongly inclined; that while they were buſied about theſe Legal Obſervations, they might be drawn off from ſuperſtitious Rites, and even conceive an hatred of them. Otherwiſe they contributed little, to raiſe the Soul of Man, to improve his Faculties, or give him Aſſurance of what he moſt deſired, an Happineſs equal to the Capacity of his Nature. They are not undeſervedly called *the weak and beggarly Elements of the world* by the Apoſtle, and are by God himſelf in *Ezek.* XX. ſaid to be *ſtatutes that were not good*, and *Judgments whereby the obſervers of them ſhould not live*; to have been given *in his Anger*; in *Puniſhment* of their *many Rebellions and Apoſtacies.*

And indeed if we conſider the great number of their poſitive Precepts, Ceremonies and Obſervations; how little they contributed to the cleanſing of the Will, or enlightning of the Underſtanding; how obſcure the Reaſons of them were; and how inconſiderable the Reward annexed to them; we muſt conclude it to have been an Inſtitution infinitely more ſevere, than what was afterward

ward introduced by Chriſt. There was indeed a Reward adjoyned to it, but that ſo far beneath the Capacity of humane Nature, that it could by no means terminate the Deſires of the Soul. And even this Reward they found by Experience to be common to the Obſervers and Violators of the Law; and if it had been appropriated to the good alone, yet was ſubject to as many Variations, as was the Body, which it principally concerned. Vol. 2.

Again, it could not but be a ſenſible Vexation to a conſidering Mind, that they were treated by God at ſuch diſtance; debarred the Knowledge of the Reaſons of thoſe Ceremonies, which were required of them; were left wholly in the dark as to the Intention of God in preſcribing of them; could diſcover no Reaſonableneſs or Excellency in them, no Agreeableneſs between them and their own Nature. It was not allowed them to enter into the Holy of Holies; to underſtand the Reaſons why ſuch carnal Obſervations were impoſed on them: Or if they had underſtood them; yet when they viewed the number, the extent, and the Difficulty of them, they even deſpaired to perform them.

They had indeed all the Reaſons common

Vol. 2. common to Natural Religion, and ſome peculiar to themſelves, to expect from the Divine Juſtice a better and more noble Reward. But then the Nature of Legal Righteouſneſs conſiſting in an univerſal and unſinning Obedience, extinguiſhed their hopes, and ſubjected them to the fear of all the Puniſhments denounced a-againſt the Tranſgreſſors of the Law, which had provided Remedies, expiatory Sacrifices, for Sins of Omiſſion, inadvertency, and a leſſer Guilt; but gave no hope of Pardon to Sins of a more hainous Nature; had aſſigned no Sacrifices for their Expiation, nor allowed any means of Pardon for them. Amidſt all the Difficulties the Mind was afflicted, being Conſcious of her own Offences, but not diſcovering the Remedies of the guilt; deſpiſing the unſatisfactorineſs of temporal Felicity, yet promiſed no better; obliged to the Obſervation of a multitude of Precepts, but taking no Complacency therein; fearing the wrath of God, and yet ſcarce able to avoid it. Thus was the Jewiſh Religion in it ſelf an heavy Burden, even without the addition of Phariſaical Interpretations, who by their Scruples, Niceties and Supererrogations had at that time almoſt doubled the weight of it.

In

In relief of all theſe diſadvantages our Lord invites the wearied Soul to take refuge in his Religion; aſſureth her of *Reſt* and Satisfaction therein; eaſe of Scruples, and removal of Anxiety; in the 28th. Verſe, bids his Diſciples not be diſquieted with the Conſcience of their paſt Sins, nor deſpair of Pardon; not fear to approach to him, as the Jews did to *Mount Sina*, when the Law was delivered by God from thence; for that *himſelf was meek and lowly in heart*; in the 29th. Verſe, ready to forgive their Sins upon ſincere Repentance, condeſcending to their Infirmities; willing to lay open all the Myſteries of his Religion to their Underſtandings; to adapt it to the meaneſt; to treat all with a conſtant Sweetneſs and Gentleneſs; to fill all the Faculties of their Souls with the Promiſe and aſſurance of a Reward, which ſhould be nothing Inferior to their moſt extended Deſires. The farther Conſideration of theſe things will fall under the Second Head propoſed, Namely. Vol. 2.

II. The *Eaſineſs* of *the Yoke* and *Lightneſs* of the *Burden* impoſed upon Mankind by the Commands of Chriſt, ſeparated from the Compariſon of other Syſtems of Religion, and as it more nearly reſpects our Practice and Obſervation of

the

Vol. 2. the Duties of it. This *Yoke* is no other than the performance of all Christian Duties, or of the Commands of Christ; which word St. *John* makes use of to express the same Sense, 1 John V. 3. *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments* are *not grievous.* A Proposition, which might perhaps appear incredible to any one who reflects upon the Nature of the Obedience required, and other passages of Scripture; That every Action of our Life is limited and regulated by it; that it extends not to the outward Act alone, but includeth the most secret Motions of the Will; that it enjoyneth Man to forsake Father and Mother, to quit his dearest Affections, to renounce the Pleasures of the World, and upon occasion even Life it self; That therefore *strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto Life; and few there be which find it*; and the Life of a Christian is said to be a continual War against the united force of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. These Reasons might possibly affright Mankind from taking such a severe Profession on them, did not the Reason of the thing, the Experience of all good Men, and the infallible Asseveration of him who is Truth it self, assure us,

us, That this *Yoke* far from being insupportable, *is light and easie.* I might Evidence this by many Reasons, but shall at this time confine my self to Three. Vol. 2.

1. The Agreeableness of it to the Nature of Man.

2. The Greatness and certainty of the Reward.

3. The external Assistances afforded in the Practice of it.

The first Reason is drawn from the Agreeableness of the Precepts of Christianity to the Nature of Man. For what doth Christianity enjoyn, which Reason doth not confirm to be the Duty of Man? What doth it require, which doth not adorn, perfect and exalt his Nature? The Sum of Christianity is to conserve a reverent Conception of God, to obey his Authority, and prefer it to all other Reasons; to exercise a constant temperance in the use of Pleasures; an universal Charity in relation to our Fellow-Members; to be just and true; to oppress none, to defraud none, to do as we would be done by.

These are the great Lines of a Christians Duty, these are the chief subject of the Law of Christ. To these indeed must be added to compleat a Christian, Faith in Christ, reliance on his Merits, Communion

Vol. 2. munion with him in those external Sacraments, which he hath instituted, to declare the mutual Union between himself and us; whereby we visibly joyn our selves to him, put our selves under his Command; declare, confirm, and reiterate our Resolutions of obeying his Commands and following his Directions. Yet can these latter scarce be accounted any part of the Christian *Yoke*; since simply considered, they include no difficulty, no restraint of the Will of Man, and would not even by the most sensual Person be accounted any *Yoke* or *Burden*; but as they are so many Marks and Confirmations of the Covenant made with God by every Christian to observe those Primary Duties, which we before mentioned.

These are no other than the necessary result of the Nature and Condition of Man in the World. As a created Being, he oweth Obedience to God; as possessing the use of Free-will and Reason, he is obliged to direct his Actions according to those Rules which reason prescribeth to him. From the light of this Reason, he is easily convinced, that it is his Duty to exercise all those Vertues we before mentioned; that every Sin is a Violation of his Duty, inasmuch as it opposeth the Direction

rection of his Reaſon which ought to guide him, and over turneth that Order and *Decorum*, which he ought to obſerve in the World. The Infirmities of his Body, the Imperfections of his Mind force him to confeſs his Dependance upon ſome greater Being; convince him that he was not put into the World to follow blindly the Inclinations of his own Will, but to conform himſelf to thoſe Rules of Government, which the common Author of all Creatures hath eſtabliſhed among them. Vol. 2.

If when he undertaketh any Action or formeth any Reſolution, he conſults his Reaſon, it will tell him, that this is his Duty, that is unlawful to him; this is Decent, that unfit for him; this becomes, that diſhonoureth his Nature. Nay, whether he takes Councel from Reaſon or not, it will not fail to ſuggeſt to him in every Action, what is good, juſt, and honourable; what impious, injuſt, and diſgraceful to him.

Now all theſe natural Suggeſtions of Reaſon, are no other than thoſe very Duties, which make up the *Yoke* of Chriſt. The Actions and Rules of Conduct are the ſame in both; the only difference lieth in the Greatneſs of the Obligation, and the reaſons upon which every Action is to

Vol. 2. ceed. For whereas Nature directeth that this ſhould be performed, becauſe conſentaneous to Reaſon, that omitted, becauſe repugnant to it: Chriſtianity requireth that the one ſhould be done, the other forborn, chiefly for the Love of God; in Conformity to his Will, and in gratitude for the Benefits of Creation and Redemption. However the Acts are ſtill the ſame. For doth not the Reaſon of all Men agree in this, that Obedience and Reverence is due to God; that whatſoever oppoſeth his Will is an Act of Rebellion, and denial of Dependence on him; that the Appetites, Paſſions, and Luſts of the Body ought to be ſubjected to the more noble Faculty of Reaſon; that it is this which conſtitutes a Man, and diſtinguiſheth his Conduct from that of Beaſts; that to let looſe the Reins to theſe Luſts, to gratifie any of them without the Aſſent of Reaſon, is to pervert the Order of Nature, and violate the Dignity of Mankind; that to be juſt, true, and charitable, is what the Order and Peace of the World requireth, to which he ought to conform himſelf, while he continueth a Member of it; that he hath no Right to defraud or injure any other; that if he ſhould do it, he is unworthy to continue his Station among Men? All

All this natural Reaſon ſuggeſteth to the Conſcience of every Man. Theſe draw not their Original from any revealed Religion, but are only inforced by it. It hath been pretended indeed by ſome Patrons of Atheiſm, tho' it can ſcarce be believed, that themſelves were perſwaded of it; that all theſe Notions are derived from the precedent Impreſſions of ſome Revealed or ſuppoſedly Revealed Religion. On the contrary, all Ages and Nations, all Orders of Men have agreed in theſe common Notions; which cannot poſſibly proceed from any thing but an univerſal inſtinct of Nature. Vol. 2.

View the moſt barbarous Nations of the World, who never heard of any inſtituted Religion; they have the ſame general Conceptions of good and bad, which we have. Look back into the moſt ancient Ages of the World, antecedent to any ſuppoſed Revelation, the ſame Ideas of Vertue and Vice will be found in all. Conſult the Schools of Philoſophers. They differed from one another in almoſt all their Speculations: In theſe practical Truths they all agreed. Laſtly, ſearch the Conſcience of every ſingle Man; and becauſe you cannot diſcover the Secrets of other Men, appeal

Vol. 2. to your own Experience; whether every Action be not attended with an immediate Approbation or Condemnation of Reaſon; whether your Conſcience doth not inſtruct you, that many things you ought to do, others to omit; and whether if you refuſe to follow the Direction of it, it doth not upbraid to you the Omiſſion or Violation of your Duty.

If then all the momentous Duties of the Chriſtian Religion be required by the Light of Nature; if what our Lord exacteth of us be no more than what Reaſon would have preſcribed to us, if no Revelation had intervened; ſurely the Obligation laid upon us by Chriſtianity is *a Burden* very *eaſie* to be born. For hence it will follow, that to execute the Office of a Chriſtian is no more, than to perform the Duty of a Man; that it is but natural to Practiſe all the Precepts of it, and that a contrary Conduct is a force of Nature. Now that whatſoever is natural to any Being is moſt eaſie to be effected by it, is no more than what common Senſe will teach us. For in being ſuch, it is moſt adapted and proportioned to the Faculties of that Being to which it is natural.

This Argument will receive a farther Illuſtration from that ſweet Complacency

cency of Mind which is inſeparable from all good Actions, and which doth infinitely alleviate the Burden and compenſate the Difficulty of it. This our Lord ſeems to have had a particular regard to in the Text, when affirming his *Yoke to be eaſie*, he uſeth a word, χρηστὸς, which in the Original more properly denoteth *Sweet* and *Pleaſant*. What greater Argument then can be conceived either of the Eaſineſs of the Duties of Chriſtianity, or of their Agreeableneſs to humane Nature, than that a grateful Complacency always attends them, while the Soul congratulates to her ſelf the performance of her Duty, the Conqueſts of adverſe Luſts, and the right uſe of her own Faculties? NoJoy can be conceiv'd more intenſe than this, none more Serene and undiſturbed, becauſe none more Spiritual, or founded upon better Reaſons. Vol. 2.

The truth of this every good Man can confirm by his own Experience. Nor do even bad Men want the ſame Conviction. For none almoſt are found ſo totally corrupted, who do not ſometimes Practiſe good Actions. And then I appeal to themſelves, whether they receive not an inward Satisfaction from the Conſcience of it. And if any Degree of Complacency be found in them, who through

Vol. 2. diſuſe are wont little to reliſh or value ſpiritual Pleaſure, what infinite Satisfaction muſt good Men reap from thence, who by a well fixed Determination have perſwaded themſelves, that the Exerciſe of Chriſtian Vertues is the only means of preſent Happineſs, and will hereafter procure yet more noble Enjoyments?

On the contrary, all vicious Actions are attended with a no leſs conſtant Diſſatisfaction, and regret of Mind, raiſed by the Dictates of Nature only. For who can be impious or diſobedient to God, and not conceive Indignation at his own Ingratitude? Who ever reflected upon any inordinate Luſt committed by him, and did not afterwards vex himſelf, that he had no more command of his Paſſions, and could not over-come a fooliſh Deſire? Who ever yielded to Drunkenneſs, and did not at the return of his Wits conclude that he had done a thing unworthy of himſelf? Thus in all other Sins, Reaſon doth not fail to upbraid to Man, that he perverted the Deſign of his Nature, degraded his Soul, and diſhonoured himſelf. This Remorſe alone (without the Fear of future Puniſhments made know by Revelation) brings far more Affliction to the Mind of Man, than the Enjoyment of any Sin brings Pleaſure

ſure to it. Theſe expire in a moment; thoſe continue as long as the uſe of Reaſon remains; which altho' it may be ſuſpended by violent Luſts for a while, yet will certainly break out with greater force, and torment the Mind with inward Shame, Anxiety, and Diſtruſt. Vol. 2.

Upon the whole, a vertuous Life is moſt agreeable, moſt eaſie, and moſt advantageous to the Nature of Man, even abſtracting from the Obligation ſuperadded by Revelation, and the Reward promiſed by it. So that our Lord in making the moral Vertues the only practical Duties of his Religion, and the Exerciſes of them to be the Conditions of his propoſed Reward, hath impoſed a moſt *eaſie* and moſt deſireable *Yoke* upon Mankind.

A Second Reaſon of the *Eaſineſs* of the Chriſtian *Yoke*, is the Greatneſs and the certainty of the Reward annexed to it. Which Reaſon more particularly rendereth eaſie that moſt arduous Duty of Chriſtianity, the Patient enduring of Perſecution, Affliction, and even Death it ſelf in the defence of it: and is to that Purpoſe imploy'd by St. *Paul*, 2 Cor. IV. 17. *For our light Affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.* Facility and Difficulty are relative Notions, and

Vol. 2. are to be meaſured by the Proportion which the worth of the end to be obtained beareth to the Labour and hazard, which are to be employed in the Acquiſition of it. If an eminent advantage may be obtained by a proportionable Induſtry, we allow it to be an eaſie Condition. When therefore the greateſt Happineſs, which our Nature is capable of, is propoſed to us upon Condition of ſuch a right uſe of our Free-will, as is in our Power; the Impoſition ought to be eſteemed an *eaſie Burden*, when it procureth to us ſuch an infinite Reward. And not only doth the Excellency of the Reward take off the Imputation of ſeverity from Chriſt's impoſing ſo ſtrict and univerſal Holineſs upon us; but is alſo an effectual Motive to us of Vigilance and Induſtry, in the Execution of the Condition required of us.

In all other Actions of Life our Endeavours are wont to be more or leſs vigorous, as the deſire of the end we aim at is more or leſs intenſe. The Fervency of the Deſire is always proportionable to our Eſteem of the Excellency of the end. That we may therefore conceive an earneſt Deſire of this noble End, and be thereby incited to uſe a ſuitable Diligence for the Attainment of it, it is neceſſary

ceſſary that we form to our ſelves a right Eſtimate of the Greatneſs and Worth of it; by reflecting on the infinite Duration, the inconceivable Pleaſures, and immutable State of it; by comparing it with all the trifling Enjoyments of this Life, and raiſing the Thoughts to an Expectation of ſomewhat yet greater than can be now conceived. This will carry the Soul of Man through all the Difficulties of a Chriſtian Life, baffle the Temptations of the World, ſurmount the Fears of Death, or temporal Affliction, much more effectually, than the deſire of Glory, the Ambition of a Crown, or the Proſecution of ſome violent Paſſion hath engag'd many in the moſt deſperate Undertakings. Vol. 2.

For in theſe latter Caſes, the Acquiſition of the end was never aſcertained to the Undertakers in the beginning of their Deſign. The moſt vigorous Induſtry and Courage was in them ſubject to the Chance of Fortune: Whereas in the former Caſe, there is an inſeparable Conjunction between the end and the means, between eternal Happineſs and true Chriſtian Obedience; which no change of Fortune can diſſolve, no unforſeen Calamity can overthrow. Therein the Undertaker is only to anſwer for his Diligence: nor is any thing required to

compleat

compleat his Succeſs but what is intirely in his Power. If he be not wanting to himſelf, he may reſt ſecure of the Reward; the Nature, the Extent, the Duration, and the Seat of which our Lord hath fully made known unto Man; that ſo he might not any longer be diſtracted with anxious Thoughts about it; and ſo hath upon that account alſo, as he Promiſed in the precedent Verſes, given *Reſt unto his Soul*, wearied before with a Fruitleſs and uncertain Search of Happineſs.

The laſt Argument, which I propoſed to ſpeak of, is taken from the external Aſſiſtance, which Chriſt hath Promiſed, and doth ſtill continue to his Diſciples in the Exerciſe of their Duty. Our Lord, in impoſing his *Yoke* upon Mankind, knew very well the Infirmities of their Nature, the Oppoſition of his Precepts to their ordinary Paſſions, the Tenderneſs and Clemency, which became the Saviour, Redeemer, and Mediator of Mankind; and therefore did not abandon them to the Conduct of their Free-will alone, but aſſiſted their Obedience with the Motions of his Holy Spirit, with thoſe ſupernatural Gifts and Graces, which he beſtows upon all his ſincere Diſciples; which render the impoſition of thoſe Precepts, which he laid upon

upon them, Eaſie and Pleaſant to them. Vol. 2.

To convey this Grace to all the worthy Receivers of it, he hath founded a Church, a Society of Men profeſſing and publickly declaring Obedience to him in that manner, and with thoſe Rites, which himſelf hath inſtituted. He hath made himſelf the Head of this Body, and as ſuch Communicates the influences of his Bleſſed Spirit to all the Members of it, to us who continue in Communion with it. If any ſeparate themſelves from this Body, whereof himſelf is the Head, they ceaſe to have any Relation to him, receive none of thoſe ſupernatural Aſſiſtances, which are derived from the Head to all parts of the Body: At leaſt they cannot receive them by the ordinary method appointed to convey them. And if any pretend new Lights and new Ways; they are ſuch as have no promiſe annexed to them.

It is not to be admired therefore, what may be truly obſerved, That all Hereticks and Schiſmaticks dividing themſelves from the Communion of the Church, have in all Ages endeavoured to take away the Obligation of moral Duties, and ſet up the Pretence of greater Lights, of a more refined Knowledge,

to

Vol. 2. to compenſate the neglect of Temperance and Meekneſs, of Juſtice aud Charity. They having divided themſelves from the Body of the Church, cut off the ordinary Communication between Chriſt and them; and thereby depriving themſelves of the benefit of thoſe Divine Graces and Aſſiſtances which are conveyed by that Channel, found themſelves unable to Practice thoſe Chriſtian Vertues, which our Lord requireth of his Diſciples; and therefore endeavoured to annul the neceſſity and Obligation of them.

But this is not to alleviate, but to caſt off the *Yoke* of Chriſt; to Claim the Benefits, and refuſe the Conditions of the Covenant which he made with Mankind: and in the mean while to cheat themſelves and others, with vain Perſwaſions and arrogant Pretences.

Our Lord hath Promiſed the Aſſiſtance of his Spirit, and therein he will not fail; he hath ſettled the means of conveying it, and that he will not change. If we ſlight the Aſſiſtance, we are unworthy of it; if we forſake the means, we are incapable. Let us rightly eſteem and implore this Aſſiſtance to our ſelves; let us hold faſt the means, whereby we may receive it; that is, a conſtant Communion

munion with his Body the Church in all her Holy Offices and Sacraments; ſo ſhall we Experience, that his Commands are not only Excellent in themſelves, agreeable to our Nature, and rendred Pleaſant by their Reward, but are alſo made Eaſie by his Grace and the Influences of his Spirit. In the whole we ſhall be convinced of the Truth of what he affirmed, That *his Yoke is eaſie, and his Burden light*, and *find* aſſurance of what he Promiſed, *Reſt to our* wearied *Souls*. Vol. 2.

The

The Thirteenth SERMON.

PREACH'D

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Rom. XII. 19.

Dearly beloved, avenge not your ſelves; but rather give place unto wrath. For it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, ſaith the Lord.

THE Apoſtle having exhorted to the Duty of Charity throughout this whole Chapter, and enforced his exhortation with many Arguments, at laſt concludeth his Arguments with theſe words, whereby he proveth, that to act in a contrary manner, were to encroach upon the Prerogative of God, and invade what he claimeth peculiarly to himſelf.

And

And ſurely no leſs an Argument than the fear of violating the Majeſty and the Power of God could deter Men from the Practice and Proſecution of revenge, which at firſt Sight appears to be ſo natural a Paſſion in Man, and can plead for it ſelf with more plauſible Arguments than any other ſin whatſoever. As that Nature directeth all Creatures to defend themſelves and repel the Aſſaults of Enemies; that for this Purpoſe all Animals are endued with proportionable Strength and Courage; that to paſs by one Enemy unrevenged expoſeth a Man to the inſults of Enemies, to the ſcorn of Friends, and to renewed Wrongs; that it is no other than Baſeneſs and Cowardize, an Argument of a mean and timerous Soul, to ſubmit patiently to the Affronts and Wrongs of another Man; and that to return *evil for evil*, to puniſh the Malice of an Offender by procuring Loſs or Grief to him, is no other than a part of diſtributive Juſtice of which every Man may be allowed to be the Adminiſtrator; that ſo as the ſmart of Revenge inflicted may puniſh the Malice of the Aggreſſor, the Pleaſure of inflicting Revenge may make ſome amends for the undeſerved Sufferings of the injured Party. Vol. 2.

Such

Vol. 2. Such Arguments Men are wont to plead in behalf of Revenge; and such did once introduce an universal Opinion in the World, that Revenge was not only a Matter allowed, but even a Vertue, the Duty of every Noble and Couragious mind, Consonant to the intentions of Nature, and the Office of every private Man.

Thus the great Masters of Morality among the Heathens; among whom nothing is more frequent than such Expressions as these; that Revenge is sweeter than Life it self; that Moderation is to be observed in creating, but none in revenging Injuries; that not to revenge a Wrong, is an Argument of Fear and Sloth, of an unmanly and degenerous Mind.

On the contrary, we are taught, throughout this whole Chapter, *to bless them which persecute us, to recompense to no Man evil for evil, to live peaceably with all Men*, and in the last place (which concerns my present Design) *not to avenge our selves, but rather, give place unto wrath*; not to take upon us to inflict the Punishment due to any sin of Injustice committed against us, but to leave that to be inflicted by God either by his own immediate Power, or by those Commissioners,

sioners, to whom he hath delegated part of his Power: Not to prevent the Justice of God herein, and foreſtall his Judgment. Vol. 2.

For that is the meaning of thoſe words: *But rather give place unto wrath.* Leave room for the Wrath or juſt Anger of God againſt ſuch Sinners to take place and diſplay it ſelf. Do not you therein arrogate to your ſelves the Office of a Judge, and by pretending to puniſh the Offender, prevent the Puniſhment deſigned by the proper Judge. The Reaſon follows, and that not new, but delivered many Ages ſince in the Old Teſtament: *For it is written; Vengeance is mine, I will repay, ſaith the Lord.* I am the Supreme Judge of the World, the Lord of all Mankind. To me only, as ſuch, it belongeth to execute Judgment, and puniſh the demerits of Men. Whoſoever takes upon him to avenge himſelf, violates my Authority, and invades my Office.

An hard Leſſon this, as it ſhould ſeem; to reſtrain the natural Paſſions of Man; to forbid the returning of Evil to avowed Enemies; to tye up the hands of Men, and that not only (as it may happen) from retaliating paſt Injuries, but alſo from preventing future Wrongs. Nay

Vol. 2. to reluctant Minds this generally appears, and is represented, as yet more Difficult; as destroying the Peace of the World, taking away the means of Self-defence, and exposing the Observers of it, to the Injuries and Tyranny of all other Men.

Yet if the Matter be well considered, nothing is more reasonable, or more conducing to the Peace of the World; that as it may be universally affirmed of the Doctrine of Christ, that it is in all things agreeable to humane Reason, and the Law of Nature; so more eminently it will appear in this point to have restored the depraved Notions of natural Reason, and to have introduced a right Sense of the Duty of Man, in Relation to the suffering and returning of Injuries. To clear this we must first fix a right Notion of Revenge; and it will then be manifest, that the Execution of it belongeth to God alone.

And here in the first place, Self-defence is to be distinguished from Revenge: the want of which distinction hath mightily promoted the cause of Revenge; while all the Arguments, which warrant a Self-defence, Men have employed in Assertion of Revenge.

Christianity forbids not those lawful means of Self-preservation, which Na-

ture

ture allows, and hath not herein in the leaſt abridged the Priviledges of Mankind. It is ſtill lawful to repel force with force, to ſeek the Preſervation of Life and Fortune, even with the Deſtruction of an Adverſary, if it can be obtained no other way; provided that this Priviledge be never employed to the diſturbance of the publick Peace of the World, or in oppoſition to thoſe lawful Powers, to whom both Life and Fortune are ſubjected. Vol. 2.

So far was God from diſarming his People in this Caſe, and forbidding to them the means of Self-defence; that he often exhorts them to fight their Battels Couragiouſly, ſent them Prophets to conduct them, endued their Commanders with Wiſdom and Valour; and was even Content, that his own poſitive Precepts ſhould yield to Self-defence, when the latter could not be maintained without the Violation of the former, as in the Caſe of fighting on the Sabbath day. A plain Argument, that Self-defence is not only permitted by God to Men, but even commanded to them; otherwiſe it could never take place of a poſitive Divine Precept; and that it is a Sin to neglect the lawful means of Self-preſervation.

Vol. 2. In the Goſpel our Lord bids us indeed, *If any one ſmites us on the one Cheek to turn to him the other alſo; and if he takes away our Coat, to give him our Cloke alſo.* But all this, as it appears from the Context to have been ſpoken in oppoſition to that eager Proſecution of Revenge which was familiar to, and thought lawful by the Jews, ſo it plainly amounts to no more than this; that rather than to endeavour Revenge, properly ſo called, rather than to delight in the Miſery of an Enemy retaliated by us upon him, we ſhould ſuffer a yet much greater Loſs; that it were more preferable to endure a double Injury, than to contract the guilt of Malice or Revenge.

Otherwiſe our Lord, who profeſſeth it far from his Intentions to alter the leaſt Tittle of the Moral Law, hath neither forbidden nor diſcountenanced a Self-defence, when free from Revenge and Malice. On the contrary he hath ratified and approved, and even inſtituted the Civil Magiſtrate (for St. *Paul* calls it the Ordinance of God) and put the Sword into his hand on purpoſe to puniſh Malefactors, and repel the Injuries of one Man from another by violence. For upon this Principle of Self-preſervation all Government is founded; and every

every Act of it, every Puniſhment in- Vol. 2.
flicted on a Malefactor, is done in Pro-
ſecution of the ſame Deſign.

Thus doth not this Self-defence in the leaſt interfere with the Prohibition of Revenge; ſince it neceſſarily includeth not Hatred or deſire of Revenge; or if it ſhould include it, it hath paſſed its Bounds, and is to be called by another name. The ſole end of Self-defence is to preſerve Life or Goods, not to offend any other; whereas the Nature of Revenge conſiſts wholly in deſigning or deſiring the Death, Loſs or Miſery of another, not as contributing to our own Self-preſervation, but as returning and puniſhing his Malice and hatred to us.

Thus Revenge, being ſeparated from the Cauſe of Self-defence, will eaſily appear what it truly is; and will want thoſe Arguments to recommend it, which it borrowed from the latter. It is the deſire or endeavour of bringing Evil upon another Man, ſolely or chiefly for this end, that he may ſuffer ſome loſs or grief; when we return an Injury to any one for this only Reaſon, becauſe we have received one either real or imaginary from him. Thus ſelf-defence may eaſily degenerate into Revenge; when a Man

Vol. 2. not content to have ſecured his own ſafety, to have diſarmed his Enemy, or to have made a fair retreat, preſſeth upon his Adverſary, purſueth his advantage, and ſeeketh the hurt or deſtruction of him; when any one Projects how to return a like Injury to that he hath received; when he conceiveth a perſonal Hatred of the Man, ſtudieth to create ſome diſadvantage to him; at leaſt retains ſo much Malice in his Heart, that he envieth and maligneth him, and ſhould entertain his Misfortunes with Complacency.

The methods and kinds of Revenge are as different, as are the ſecret workings of Malice; nor can either Malice or Envy be ever found without the conjunction of Revenge and Imagination of ſome paſt Injury. It is ſaid, that *Cain* ſlew his Brother out of Envy; yet was that Envy accompanied with the deſire of Revenge, for having as he thought, robbed him of the favour of God, by procuring the greater ſhare of it to himſelf. Other Acts of Revenge may more eminently appear to belong to that Denomination; as when *Joab* killed *Abner* for the Death of his Brother; and *Herod* ſought the Death of *John* the Baptiſt for reprehending his inceſtuous Marriage; yet this we may

may be assured of, as Revenge can never be formed in the Mind without precedent Malice, and subsequent Envy of the others out-living, altho' but for one moment, the Execution of his Revenge; so neither can Malice or Envy take place without a desire of Revenge. And then as in all other Sins, so in this also, the Guilt of it consists not so much in the Execution of it, as in the precedent Approbation of it by the Will; and becomes not the less because not put in Execution. Vol. 2.

And as all other Sins are proposed to the Will under some specious Pretence; so Revenge assumeth the shew of Justice; and therein chiefly makes good the Charge, which we before mentioned, of incroaching upon the Prerogative and Authority of God. It is indeed a plausible Plea to pretend, that Justice must be strictly observed in the World; that it is not fit the least Injury of Men should pass unpunished; that they ought to expiate the Guilt of their Injury by a proportionable Punishment; that otherwise the Peace of the World cannot be maintained, and good Men will be always exposed to the Insults and Oppression of others. Upon this ground, and with these Pretences, Men take upon them the

Vol. 2. Office of a Supreme Judge; they will needs determine the quantity of every Man's demerits, and inflict a Puniſhment upon it.

This Arrogance is viſible in every Act of Revenge; where the Perſon revenging propoſeth to himſelf to puniſh the Malice of the Offender; not only to ſecure his own ſafety (for while it proceeds no farther, it is not Revenge) but alſo to procure ſuch a Puniſhment to the other, as may compenſate for the Flagitiouſneſs of the Injury which he hath committed. And herein chiefly conſiſts the Offence of a revengeful Mind againſt God, (for as it is an Offence againſt our Neighbour, I do not now conſider it) this conſtituteth the Guilt of it, that it invadeth the Office of the Supreme Judge, which belongeth to God alone. And upon this is founded the Reaſon brought againſt Revenge by the Apoſtle in the Text: *Avenge not your ſelves; but rather give place unto Wrath* (await the Execution of the Divine Wrath upon all Sinners,) *For it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay ſaith the Lord.* In which words, God taketh the Execution of Revenge from Man in the former part of them, and in the latter part appropriates it to himſelf.

I will consider both together; for that Vol. 2.
the same Reasons, which forbid the Exercise of Revenge to Man, affix it to God; and for this very Cause it is unlawful to Man because it belongeth solely to God. To pass Judgment upon the demerits of every sinful Action, to determine the quantity of the Guilt, and affix a proper Punishment to it, belongs only to the supreme Judge of the World; which Office is invested in God, as being the Creator of all things living, and the absolute Lord of the World; which when he had formed, he quitted not to the blind Operations of Chance, nor to the Disposition of inferior Spirits, nor yet to the unruly Wills of Men; but retained the Government in his own hand, reserved to himself the distribution of Rewards and Punishments, upon which account he is called *the Judge of all the Earth*, Gen. XVIII. 25.

One part of this Office of Judge is to execute Vengeance upon Sinners; for which Reason he is called *the God of Vengeance* more than once in the Ninth Psalm. The Execution of his just Sentence upon Sinners is termed Revenge; and Sinners the object of it are called his Adversaries, as Deut. XXXII. 43. *He will render Vengeance to his Adversaries*; and

Vol. 2. and in many other places of Scripture. To teach us, that he claims that Office to himſelf, and that he alone is capable of recompencing in due manner the Guilt of every injurious Act, and all Sins are ſuch to him.

He is the Supreme Lord of all, and therefore hath a full Right to judge his Creatures; he is the common Lord of all, and therefore cannot be ſuſpected of partiality. His Juſtice will not ſuffer any Sin to eſcape unpuniſhed. He is merciful; and far from puniſhing Offences beyond their Merit, chaſtiſeth Sinners leſs than they deſerve. He ſearcheth the Conſcience of every Man, cannot be deceived by falſe Repreſentations, nor be drawn aſide by Paſſion or Prejudice. He knoweth exactly the true demerit of every Sin; and can unerringly Proportion the Puniſhment to the Crime. He hath promiſed in a peculiar manner to revenge the Injuries done to his faithful Servants; and by a poſitive Precept hath taken Revenge out of the hands of Men.

If after all this, Men will preſume to intermeddle in the Cauſe of Revenge, and pretend to puniſh the Pravity of any Action; they manifeſtly uſurp the Office of God, and place themſelves in his Seat

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of Judicature. An attempt, which he will not ſo eaſily pardon; who, as he ſaith of himſelf, is *jealous of his Honour, and will not give his Glory to another.* Vol. 2.

Nor indeed can ſuch Revenge be executed, without pretending to that Supreme Power, which is inveſted in God. For not to ſay that this were to refuſe Obedience to his Commands, and therein to renounce his Government, who hath commanded the contrary; to paſs by that; to revenge an Injury muſt ſuppoſe an abſolute Subjection of the Perſon, on whom the Revenge is to be inflicted.

For after every Man hath uſed the Priviledges of Self-defence in oppoſition to the other, he hath no more Right left of acting any againſt him. The Puniſhment of the others injurious Malice belongeth not to him, unleſs the abſolute Subjection of the other gives him juſt Title to it. And in this Caſe it is not ſufficient, that the Body of the one ſhould be ſubject to the other (for that doth often happen) but the Cognizance of the ſecret Actions of the Soul muſt alſo belong to him, who judgeth of the demerits of the Fact; otherwiſe it will be impoſſible to determine how much, or how little Malice the Injury included in it. Whereas in this reſpect no Man

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Vol. 2. is ſubject to another; we are all equally Fellow-Servants to God. And then the Expoſtulation of the Apoſtle will take place: *Who art thou, that judgeſt another Mans ſervant? to his own Maſter he either ſtandeth or falleth.* This cannot be done without aſſuming the Authority of the Maſter; and this is certainly done, as often as Revenge is intended or effected.

But not only upon this account are we injurious to the Majeſty of God, inaſmuch as we are all Fellow-Creatures and the works of his hands, if we take Revenge, and in that make our ſelves Judges of ſuch our Fellow-Servants; but in that, while we all equally hope for Pardon from the hands of God our common Judge, we deny it to one another, and preſume to require that from God, which we will not Grant our ſelves. If in pleading for Revenge we alledge, that another hath injured us; and are not we in every Sin injurious to God? Thy Fellow-Servant hath perhaps injured thee once or twice; but thou haſt injured God, the Lord of both, very often, perhaps every day of thy Life; and then what equality is there between injuring a Fellow-Servant and a Maſter? He perhaps was provoked, nay firſt injured by thee, before he

he committed any Acts of Hatred or Malice againſt thee: But thou haſt offended thy Lord, from whom thou never receivedſt any Injuries, by whom thou haſt been obliged with the greateſt Benefits, by whoſe Favour thou liveſt, and from whom thou expecteſt all that can make thee Happy. Vol. 2.

Conſider, that if God ſhould examine ſtrictly, and immediately revenge all thy Offences againſt him, thou haſt not one day to live: *For if thou Lord ſhouldeſt be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, O Lord who may abide it?* So ſaid a better Man than thou art; and much more muſt thou confeſs, if thou either diſſembleſt not with others or deceiveſt not thy ſelf.

For to paſs by all thoſe ſecret Sins, which are known only to every Man's Conſcience, and have no witneſs but God alone; if we ſhould be required to give an account of thoſe open and manifeſt ones which we daily commit, what Pardon could we expect? If God ſhould take a ſevere Account of our Negligence and want of attention in Prayer, of all the idle Speeches proceeding from our Mouth, and the raſh Judgments which we make, and ſuch other Sins and Inadvertencies committed but in one day;

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we ſhould have juſt Reaſon to deſpair of Pardon. But if he ranſacks our Souls, and brings forth into Judgment all the ſecret Sins of it, the evil Deſires and unclean Thoughts, the unlawful Motions and vain Imaginations; we ſhould then have no hope left. And if the Sins of one day bring inevitable Deſtruction upon us, without the Mercy and the Pardon of God; what an Abyſs of Mercy will the Sins of a whole Life require? Yet all the Sins he condeſcends to pardon, all this Mercy he extends to man, with this ſingle Condition, that he pardon the Offences of his Fellow-Chriſtian. For this is an Argument againſt Revenge peculiar to the Chriſtian Religion.

To the Jews the Promiſes of Divine Pardon were neither ſo full nor ſo clear; and therefore God in giving Laws to them, thought it convenient to wink at their exerciſe of Revenge in ſome Caſes. I will not reckon as ſuch that Law of giving *an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.* For however it was afterwards moſt groſly miſ-interpreted by the Jews; it included not any thing of Revenge in the firſt Inſtitution and Deſign of it. But certainly that Law cannot be excuſed from Revenge, which alloweth to the Kindred

Kindred of any Man ſlain unadviſedly to retaliate his *D*eath upon the Author of it, if they overtook him before he entred into any City of refuge. Vol. 2.

It is our Happineſs, that as we have a better Religion and greater Promiſes, ſo we have ſtronger Arguments to perſwade us to our Duty. And in this Caſe, he, who gave us both, hath forbidden the Execution of Revenge to us, and appropriated it to himſelf. So that not only upon account of the Nature of the thing, but alſo of the Divine Command, Revenge is made injurious to God, and unlawful to us.

Further, not only do we want that Authority, which Revenge pre-ſuppoſeth; not only are we precluded by the expreſs Prohibition of God; but we alſo want other qualifications abſolutely neceſſary to us, before it be convenient that we be intruſted with the Execution of Revenge. I will inſtance but in two:

Firſt, Knowledge of the true Guilt of the Crime which we would revenge.

It muſt be acknowledged that the Merits of a Cauſe ought to be known, before any Judgment be paſſed on it. In Humane Judicatures the Peace of the World and Intereſt of publick Societies require, that probable Evidence be accepted,

Vol. 2. cepted, that Judgment be given according to the appearance of things. But if Men pretend to judge the Conſciences of others, to define the Hainouſneſs of the Guilt of their Offences, and to execute the Puniſhment upon it, which is the Proper work of Revenge; they ought exactly to know the moſt private thoughts of the Soul; by what ſteps and arguments the Will was induced to commit that Injury; what Judgment the Underſtanding formed of it when it was committed. Otherwiſe Men may groſly miſtake; they may Judge that to be an Injury, which was intended by the other for a Kindneſs; in which Caſe there is rather Merit than Guilt in the Offender: And if his intended Benefit doth really turn to the Detriment of the other, it will be a misfortune to them both; yet the Merit of the Benefit ought not to be eſteemed leſs. Thus a paſſionate Revenge may be imployed againſt its own Benefactors, and inverting the Courſe of Juſtice puniſh the Well-doers.

In other Caſes Men may interpret Acts of inadvertency to proceed from a formed Malice, and puniſh what is indeed but a venial Injury, as a Mortal offence. They may proſecute the Execution of revenge, even

even after the other hath repented of the Injury in his mind, and reſolved (if poſſible) to make Reparation for it, and thereby hath expiated the guilt of the Offence. Vol. 2.

In all theſe and many other Caſes, Men may err moſt groſly in paſſing their Judgment upon the enormity of Injuries offered to them, which muſt be ſuppoſed to precede all Revenge. And how dangerous ſuch Errors are our Lord acquaints us, when he aſſureth us, Matth. VII. 2. *With what Judgment ye judge, ye ſhall be judged; and with what meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again.* This Reaſon makes it impoſſible for Man to execute Revenge aright, if it ſhould be permitted to him; and dangerous to be deſired; and for this Reaſon it ought to be taken out of the hands of Man, and be committed to him alone, who is the Searcher of all Spirits.

Again, if it were poſſible for Man to form a right Judgment of the guilt of every Offence, and the quantity of the Puniſhment to be inflicted; he would ſtill commit fatal Miſcarriages in the Execution of it. His Paſſions are ſo violent, that he would far exceed the Limits of the preſcribed Puniſhment, add weight and ſharpneſs to it in Complyance with his own Hatred, and imagine that his Anger ought to be indulged therein. Nay I fear, that in all Caſes of Revenge it will be found,

that the Punishment is inflicted not out of abhorrence to the sin committed, but out of Malice and Hatred to the Person of the other, not to reform the irregularity of the other, but to gratifie his own Passion; not to oppose sin, but to harm a supposed Enemy. And thus not only the Danger of incurring the guilt of Injustice, Hatred and Malice would ensue; but also the Peace of the World would be wholly over-turned; Mankind would be involved in continual War; while he who were first injured carried his Revenge beyond the limits of a just Punishment, and the excess of that Punishment, being a real Injury, Entitles the other to a fresh Revenge. I might therefore insist upon the reasonableness of the Divine Prohibition of revenge to Man, from the advantage which it brings to the Preservation of the Peace and Order of the World; were it not an Argument too inconsiderable to be employed in Conjunction with the former.

To return therefore to the former Consideration, since the Justice of all Punishment consists in the Parity of it to the guilt of the Crime committed; and vehemence of Passion, to which humane Nature is incident, suffers not Men to observe that Parity in execution of Revenge, and not to observe it is a sin against God; as in many other Respects, so in this also, that it

it is a Violation of Juſtice; we ought to eſteem it a ſingular Benefit, that God hath taken the Execution of revenge into his own hands, and not left the Management of it to our Diſcretion; leaſt it ſhould unavoidably expoſe us to the Danger of ſin, either in carrying it beyond its juſt Bounds, or in executing it for other Reaſons than the Love of Juſtice or Hatred of ſin. Vol. 2.

And to this Conſideration the Apoſtle ſeems to have had a peculiar regard, when he citeth that paſſage of the Old Teſtament *Vengeance is mine*, &c. which in the place referred to, *Deut.* XXXII. 35. plainly relates to this Matter. For there God having denounced to the Jews the Puniſhments he would inflict on them, in Caſe of their Apoſtacy from him, telleth them among other things, that he would deliver them into the hands of their Enemies, into the power of ſtrange Nations, who ſhould tyrannize over them, and mightily oppreſs them, and therein become the Executioners of thoſe Puniſhments, which he deſigned to their ſins. Not that thereby their Tyranny and Oppreſſion ſhould become the leſs unlawful, becauſe ſubſervient to the ſecret purpoſes of God, to which they in oppreſſing the Jews, had no regard, but only to the ſatisfaction of their Hatred and other Paſſions. And therefore this Oppreſſion, ſo far exceeding the Rules of Juſtice, God

Vol. 2. in the 35th. Verse aforecited threatens, that he will severely revenge upon them. And accordingly in XXV. of *Ezekiel* 12th. God foretels the utmost Execution of his Wrath upon *Edom*, for taking a too severe Revenge of the People of *Israel*, altho' himself had delivered them into their hands to be plagued by them. So that if no other Argument disswaded us from the prosecution of Revenge, if a moderate Revenge were even permitted by God, yet the Difficulty of observing moderation in it, and the danger of incurring sin thereby, should deterr us from it.

Thus Men are made unfit to be entrusted with the execution of Revenge, for that they know not certainly the just Proportion of the supposed Crime, and the Punishment due to it; and altho' they were secured of it, yet would rather consult the direction of their own Passions than the Rules of Justice. Yet the Cause of revenge is still maintained in the World; and no wonder, when it is supported by so many Passions, as Envy, Hatred, Malice, and the like.

These indeed, to minds of more happy Education, and nobler Thoughts, naturally appear odious; and therefore such as pretend to a better Blood and greater Minds, found their Practice of revenge upon a Principle of Honour, to which they Fancy all other Considerations ought to yield;

enter

entertaining a vain Perſwaſion that this Ho- Vol. 2.
nour cannot conſiſt with the patient indu-
ring of Injuries, and that every Affront
unrevenged draws upon them the imputa-
tion of Cowardize.

An Opinion built upon falſe Notions of Honour and Valour; and which far from being an Argument of true Greatneſs of Mind, manifeſts a real weakneſs in it. For wherein is the Honour of Man to be placed, but in ſuch Perfections, as may improve his Faculties, adorn his Nature, and promote his Happineſs? If upon theſe Principles he raiſeth the favourable eſteem of other Men; his Honour is then truly founded. If for other Reaſons, which are indeed no Perfections, he fancieth himſelf to be admired, he betrays the weakneſs of his Judgment, in that he prides himſelf in the Admiration of others no leſs injudicious. Such is, when Eſteem is founded upon Raſhneſs or a precipitate Boldneſs, upon Impatience of bearing the leaſt Indignity, and preferring this Reſolution to all Conſiderations. If this be a real Honour, then ſuch a paſſionate determination muſt be indeed a perfection of Nature, an improvement of Reaſon; but if that be too groſs to affirm, the pretence of Honour muſt be laid aſide.

Nor yet can any Argument of Valour or Graetneſs of Mind, be drawn from ſuch a

Vol. 2. Conduct. Valour indeed is ſuch a conſtant Reſolution of Mind, as cannot be moved or over-turned by any external Accident, cannot be interrupted by Fears and Paſſions; and a Mind truly great is placed above all ſuch mean Reſentments, and rather ſcorns than fears the Attempts of other Men. How then can he be ſaid to make good this Character, whom an Injury ſhall torment and diſquiet; whoſe Thoughts may be ruffled, and his Paſſions raiſed at the pleaſure of any other; who by manifeſting ſo great a Concern in little matters, betrays the Conſciouſneſs of his own unworthineſs and imperfection, of the want of real Worth and Happineſs, which can be ſo far impaired by Triſles and petty Injuries, that without Revenge it cannot be reſtored? In Truth there is no greater Indication of an abject and mean Spirit, of Cowardize and Imperfection of mind, than that impatience, that fear and jealouſie, which always attends Revenge thus founded upon miſtaſten Honour.

But I do injury to the Cauſe I handle, when I ſeek to recommend the Laws of God concerning Revenge by an Argument ſo far inferior to the weight of Divine Authority. To Chriſtians (and in this place I preſume my Speech doth reach no other) it ought to be a ſufficient Confutation of the pretence of Honour in Revenge, that

our

our Lord hath forbidden the practice of it. For since his Religion tends to advance the Perfection of humane Nature, and to restore right Notions of all Moral Actions; it is impossible that true Honour or Valour should promote the exercise of Revenge which he hath forbidden. Vol. 2.

The pretence of Honour in the Execution of Revenge is vain indeed, yet not so Criminal as that other ordinary pretence of satisfying Justice therein: When Men prosecute their Revenge against others, under pretence of Zeal for Justice, and least the guilt of any sin should escape unpunished. This those are wont to alledge in defence of their Revenge, whose Revenge is founded upon a Principle of Malice, not of mistaken Honour. To confess openly that they take Revenge, because they hate their Neighbours, would be too shameless an Acknowledgment of their own baseness; and might also overthrow those Artifices, by which such Men commonly work their Revenge. For which they strain their Wits to find out plausible Pretences for the visible Effects of their secret Malice; assigning the Cause of all to be their Love of Justice, of their Religion, or of their Country. And such is the Credulity of mankind, that these Pretences seldom want Success, covering the Malice and Rancor of a canker'd Soul; and giving

Vol. 2. the moſt eaſie and ſecure Opportunities of Revenge.

All are apt to cenſure and condemn Revenge, when proceeding from the Principle of falſe Honour, which was before mentioned; becauſe the Motive of it is not and cannot be diſſembled; yet in Truth this ſort of Revenge is infinitely leſs Criminal than the former ariſing from Hatred and Malice, however diſſembled, and aſſuming to it ſelf more ſpecious Names. This is formed by a violent Commotion of Mind, which laſteth not many hours; but that by an hardned Malice, which worketh ſecretly for many years together. This is commonly effected in the heat of Blood, when the Soul hath ſcarce time to recollect it ſelf or command the unruly Paſſions of the Body; but that is raiſed and carried on by deliberate thought and reſolution, which is the utmoſt Aggravation that any ſin can receive. This may ſometime fall even upon a good Man, who through the heat of Paſſion, and from a violent Indignation of receiving unworthy Injuries, may ſuddenly be betrayed to the Deſire or the Execution of Revenge; but of the other a good Man can never be guilty, ſince it is impoſſible that Hatred and Malice, which are habitual ſins, ſhould conſiſt with the leaſt degree of Goodneſs.

In all habitual ſins the Mind cannot but many

many times reflect upon its own Diſeaſes, and be as often convinced of the unlawfulneſs of thoſe Vices, which it nouriſheth. The Divine Prohibition of thoſe ſins often recurs to the Memory, and the Soul cannot but be conſcious of her own Diſeaſes; yet in ſpight of all theſe Conſiderations the Man reſolveth to retain his Hatred and Malice towards others. And in this Reſolution is encouraged from the Conſideration, that theſe ſins (being cloſe and ſecret) will conſiſt with the pretence of Sanctity, and may be ſerviceable to him in his baſe Deſigns againſt his Neighbours. Vol. 2.

And of this ſort are all the ſins of Hypocrites; fixed and determinate Reſolutions of perſevering in oppoſition to the Laws of God; and ſtill making uſe of his glorious Name to carry on private Deſigns. No wonder then, that in Scripture the moſt ſevere Puniſhments are ſtill denounced againſt Hypocrites; ſince theirs are all deliberate ſins, ſuch as Oppreſſion, Covetouſneſs, Injuſtice, Lying, Slandering, Perfidiouſneſs, Hatred, and Malice, all ſins of the moſt enormous Guilt, and heightened by this farther Conſideration, that the ſpecious pretences of Piety, Religion, and Zeal are made uſe of to execute the ſeveral Deſigns of them.

Particularly in the Caſe of malicious Revenge, nothing is more ordinary than to pretend

Vol. 2. pretend a zealous Concern for the Puniſh-
ment of Evil doers, as if they would ſup-
ply the defect of the *Divine* Juſtice, or of
the Laws of their Countrey, and puniſh
the Guilt of ſins, for which God hath or-
dinarily provided no Puniſhment in this
Life, reſerving it to another. Yet often-
times the ſins of others, which theſe Men
would pretend to puniſh, are indeed no-
thing elſe but oppoſition to their Humours,
Fancies, and Deſigns; it being in the ac-
count of ſome Men, an unpardonable Crime
to be of a contrary or another Party; to
have croſſed or oppoſed a Deſign of the
others, altho' never ſo unreaſonable; or per-
haps to have once performed their Duty
without Partiality and corrupt Favour to
others, when the Laws of their Countrey
did require it. Certainly if the Guilt of
ſins is to be meaſured from the Evil Con-
ſequences of them; ſuch malicious Revenge
will be found the greateſt of all ſins; Be-
ing the Cauſe and occaſion of publick Ca-
lamities, over-turning the Peace and Pro-
ſperity of whole Nations, and bringing
them to Deſtruction.

Great and numerous Societies of Men,
ſuch as this Nation is, cannot eaſily be diſ-
ſolved without inteſtine Diviſions, and
ſuch are always the effect of malicious Re-
venge. In this manner we ſhall find almoſt
all the great Societies of the World to have
been

been broken, when they have divided into two or more Parties, and thoſe continually practiſing upon each other, under Pretence of preſerving the religious or civil Rights of the Countrey againſt the Invaſion of the other; and as each prevail, employing their Intereſt and Power not to the upholding of the Religion or Laws, but to the ruin or vexation of the others. Vol. 2

I will not apply this to our own Nation, or bring any Inſtance from our Times, leaſt I ſhould be thought to engage in any Party: But if we call to mind the Hiſtory of the Jews, we ſhall find many Examples of ſuch malicious Revenge covered under ſuch ſpecious pretences.

Thus when the Jewiſh Magiſtrates reſolved to take away our Saviour's Life; they put on a mighty ſhew of Zeal for the publick Service, and accuſed him to the Roman Governour, as an Enemy unto *Ceſar*: Although themſelves indeed cared ſo little for *Ceſar*, that they had at that very time formed the deſign of a general Rebellion againſt him, as appeared ſhortly after. And when this Rebellion broke out, and the People unanimouſly attempted to caſt off the Roman Yoke and recover their ancient Liberty; the moſt bloody and wicked part of them, took upon them the name of Zealots, & under pretence of extraordinary Concern for the publick Intereſt,

and

Vol. 2. and punishing the secret Favourers and Friends of the *Romans*, murdered or robbed every Man his private Enemy; and by this Division made away to the Arms of the *Romans*, who without this advantage could not easily have overcome that populous and resolute Nation.

These Considerations ought to divert Men from a resolved Prosecution of Revenge; and much more those Arguments, which might be drawn from the Scope or Design of the Christian Religion might produce this Effect, if we could perswade our selves, that Men did in earnest believe the Truth of it and submit to it. But when almost every Man pleads an Exemption from the Obligation of it in all Commands, which oppose his peculiar Passions; when little beside the Pretence of it is left among us, and even that pretence continued, not out of any Reverence to Religion, but because it is serviceable to Secular and mean Designs, we cannot but despair of prevailing with the greater part of Men therein. However we must declare, that nothing is more contrary to the Spirit and Design of Christianity than to study Revenge, to continue Hatred and Animosity without end, and never to forget and forgive an Injury. Such a conduct is directly opposite to the Doctrine and Example of our Lord; and however covered with specious Colours of wonderful

derful Zeal, or Purity, or Affection to any Party, will be no leſs damnable in a Chriſtian, than Idolatry in a Heathen. Vol. 2.

Laſtly, If neither the Reaſon of the thing, nor the Divine Prohibition, nor the regard of publick Security concerned therein, nor the direct oppoſition of Chriſtianity to it, can draw Men from the Love of Revenge; yet at leaſt it cannot be denied, that the aſſurance of God in the latter part of the Text, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay*, hath taken from them that common pretence, before mentioned, of Zeal for the ſatisfaction of Juſtice; leaſt if Revenge ſhould not be inflicted, the Guilt of any ſin ſhould eſcape unpuniſhed.

This therefore God hath fully provided for; who as he is the ſupreme Lord of all, and Judge of the whole World, cannot be ſuppoſed to fall ſo far in the Diſtribution of Juſtice, as to permit any ſin to paſs unobſerved by him, neither expiated by Repentance, nor attended with Puniſhment; and hath moreover obliged himſelf by Promiſe to revenge the Injuries offered to his faithful Servants; and that (as our Lord ſaith) he will do, *although he bears long with them*, Luk. XVIII. 25.

It would be unreaſonable to expect that his Puniſhments ſhould always be inflicted on the unjuſt Aggreſſor in this Life; nor hath he promiſed any ſuch thing. The place

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in *Deuteronomy* referred to in the Text, in the Original runs thus: *To me belongeth Vengeance or Recompence in time*, or to be executed in due time. It cannot be expected, that his Punishments should always immediately follow the Commission of every Crime or Injury, unless we desire the World should be in a manner dispeopled and become a Theatre of dreadful Tragedies. It is sufficient, that he hath ordinarily secured us from the more disquieting Injuries of unjust Men, by the Commission which he hath given to the Civil Magistrate to revenge them in his stead. And if he should fail in the Execution of his entrusted Office; we are not so considerable, as singly to deserve an extraordinary Interposition of Providence in behalf of us. If we desire this Revenge should be extended yet farther, and should punish in this Life, and for our Sakes even the Guilt of Injuries offered to us; we manifest an inhumane Disposition of Mind, delighting in the Miseries of other Men.

God hath promised indeed as a benefit to his faithful Servants, that he will revenge the Injuries offered to them. But if this Revenge be taken in this Life; the benefit consisteth not in the Pleasure arising from the suffering of Enemies, but either in the Enjoyment of temporal Peace secured thereby, or in the perswasion which good

Men

Men may thence conceive, that they are beloved by God. If the Revenge be taken in another Life, the benefit consisteth wholly in the latter. For far be it from the Spirits of good Men now in Heaven, who were injured by bad Men when alive, to take delight in the Torments of the Damned, because they were once their Enemies; and far be it from us to enhance the Joys of Heaven by such unworthy Considerations. Complacency in the Sufferings of other Men, which is to be found in all Revenge properly so called, can find no place in Heaven; and that it may find no place on Earth, may this Discourse conduce. Vol. 2.

The Fourteenth SERMON.

Preach'd on *Easter-Day.*

1690.

AT LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Acts XI. 24.

Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible, that he should be holden of it.

HOW Glorious the Resurrection of our Lord was, which we this day Commemorate, how undeniable at that time, how powerful an assurance of all his precedent Promises and Revelations, what effect it had both in the Mind of his Disciples and his Crucifiers, how effectually it demonstrated to the whole World, the Divinity both of his Mission and his Person; as the whole Series of their Actions immediately subsequent to it do demonstrate, so this Declaration made by them in the Text doth evince. They who before had fled upon his apprehension,

prehenſion, had loſt all their hopes at his Crucifixion, had either denied or forſaken him; who began to doubt whether *it were that he ſhould have redeemed Iſrael*, and gave up all for loſt, reſumed their Courage and their Faith at the news and aſſurance of his Reſurrection. They now ſaw that Salvation wrought, which before they had even ceaſed to hope for. The moſt incredulous of them could now ſay to him, *My Lord and my God*; nor did they henceforward admit any doubt of thoſe glorious Promiſes, of which they had herein received ſo great a Teſtimony. They feared not to profeſs their belief in him openly, to Arraign the Impiety of the Jews in Crucifying an innocent Perſon, and him, no other than their own Meſſias, *the Lord of Life*, to denounce to them the certainty of their Deſtruction without belief in him; not only to teſtifie his Reſurrection in that great Concourſe of the Jews met together at the Feaſt of Pentecoſt, but alſo to declare it impoſſible that he ſhould not have riſen again; as in theſe words, *Whom God hath raiſed up, having looſed the pains of death; becauſe it was not poſſible that he ſhould be holden of it*, which preſent us with Vol. 2.

I. The Affirmation of the Reſurrection of Chriſt. *Whom God hath raiſed up.*

II. The manner of it. *Having looſed the pains of death.*

III. The Reaſon of it. *Becauſe it was not poſſible*, &c.

1. The words aſſure us of the Truth of Chriſt's Reſurrection: A Truth both well known to the Apoſtles, who did then relate it, and atteſted by *many infallible proofs*, as it is in the foregoing Chapter, Verſe 3. ſo that it could not be denied by thoſe who ſhould only hear it. Let us take a view of theſe Proofs, both for the Confirmation of our Faith, and to amplifie the Glory of that Myſtery, to the Memory of which this day is Sacred.

In relating then the Reſurrection of our Lord, the Holy Penmen have been very exact in relating all the Circumſtances and the Proofs of it; manifeſting that he was really dead after his Crucifixion, and as truly alive again after his Reſurrection; that this was known to his Enemies, as well as his Diſciples; and atteſted from Heaven by the Miniſtry of Angels, and by God himſelf. In a matter of ſo great Concern it was neceſſary that all the Points of it ſhould be clearly proved, and none remain liable to the leaſt Exception.

In the firſt place, it was required that aſſurance ſhould be given of his having been really dead. An Article which is fully expreſſed in the Creed, the common Profeſſion of our Faith; wherein we declare him *to have been dead and buried, and*

to

to have descended into Hell; that his Soul was truly separated from his Body; the places being therein assigned, wherein each were contained from the time of his Burial to that of his Resurrection. His Body remained in the Grave. His Soul was in the state of other separated Souls, *in Hell*; whether we understand thereby, either the ordinary Condition of departed Souls, or the place of damned Souls. I will not now engage in that Controversie, it is sufficient to say, That either Opinion placeth his Soul in that interval of time among other Souls separated from the Body. Vol. 2.

That the Soul of Christ was thus truly separated, appeareth from the concurrent Judgment of his Enemies, as well as Friends at that time. The Soldiers sent to break his Legs while hanging on the Cross, that so they might hasten his Death, whom they supposed not yet to have expired, found him *already dead*. *Joseph* of *Arimathea*, and the devout Woman which followed him, taking him down from the Cross, laid him in his Grave, being well assured that he was then Dead. His Disciples, who if any shew of Reason might be offered, would not easily believe *him* dead, from whom they then expected a temporal Kingdom, yet were so far perswaded of it, that at his first appearing to them, they were affrighted, and *supposed they had seen a*

Vol. 2. *Spirit.* To these Proofs nothing more could be added to Evince the reality of his Death; an Evidence, which is wanting to all the Relations of Men raised from the Dead, opposed by the Heathens to the Resurrection of our Lord. They alledged from *Plato* the Story of *Eris* lying for many days among the dead Bodies, and after that recovering Life again; and pretended that *Apollonius Tyaneus*, whom they set up in opposition to Christ, had raised a certain Person to Life. But the first was not related by any, for more than a thousand years after the Fact was pretended to be done; and in the second Case, the Heathen Historian confesseth, that he dare not affirm that the Person was truly Dead.

Not after his Resurrection was it less evident, that Christ was truly alive, invested with Soul and Body. All the Actions of Life, and Arguments of a real Body met in his. He was seen by a great number of his Disciples, who judged it to be such. He eat and drank with them, which proved his Body not to have been a meer Phantasm or Aerial Apparition. He talked and *reasoned with them out of the Scriptures*, which demonstrated that Body to be indued with a rational Soul. He appealed to their Sense of feeling, commanded them to *handle* him; said to unbelieving *Thomas*, *reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and*

and reach hither thy hand and thruſt it into my ſide, which manifeſts that the Body which he then offered to that Tryal, was that very Body which had ſuffered on the Croſs, and ſtill retained the Print of the Nails, and the Impreſſion of the Spear. That this ſame Body and Soul reunited, was alſo joyned to the Divinity, as before his Paſſion, appeared from his many Miracles wrought after his Reſurrection. Vol. 2.

Thus we have a true, proper and real Reſurrection. And that all theſe things were ſo, we have the Teſtimony, firſt of his own Diſciples; the Faith of whom, although ſo nearly related to him, cannot be called in queſtion, ſince they laid down their Lives in Confirmation of it: Nor can it be imagined that any Men ſhould die for the Teſtimony of what they knew to be falſe. Of theſe the pious Women were firſt Bleſſed with the ſight of him; whether it were in Reward of their maintaining their Love and Fidelity to him, when his Apoſtles had forſaken him; or that they came into the Garden where the Sepulchre was, immediately after the Reſurrection, and before he was yet departed out of it. They ſaw him, knew him, and ſaluted him, *held him by the feet and worſhipt him.* The Apoſtles being adverti ſed of it by them, haſted to ſee their Maſter, and received not only a tranſient view of him, but converſed

Vol. 2. with him *for forty days together*, and *by many infallible proofs* were assured of the truth of it. Afterwards *he appeared to more than five hundred at once*; and at last ascended up to Heaven in the presence of them all.

To the witness of Friends, we will add the Testimony of his Enemies, which in all Cases is allowed to be of great weight. The Soldiers who were employed by the Jews to watch his Sepulchre, plainly saw the Effects of Divine Power, which accompanied his Resurrection, although being astonished and confounded at such unusual Prodigies, they did not well perceive it, or perhaps were not suffered by their Fears to stay, till Christ should proceed out of the Sepulchre. They felt the Earthquake, which removed the stone rolled to the mouth of the Sepulchre, *they saw the countenance of an Angel like lightning, and his raiment white as snow*, upon which *they did shake and became as dead Men*, and coming into the City *shewed to the chief Priests all the things that were done*, as we read, Matth. xxviii. 11.

The Angels and heavenly Hosts had before joyned with Men in celebrating the Nativity of Christ, and they here concurred in witnessing his Resurrection. The Woman coming to the Sepulchre betimes in the Morning, presently after the Resurrection, and looking for the Body of their beloved

beloved Lord in the Sepulchre, found there *two Angels in white, ſitting one at the head, the other at the feet, where the Body of Jeſus had lain, who ſaid to them, why ſeek ye the dead among the living? He is not here, he is riſen, come ſee the place where the Lord lay.* Vol. 2.

Laſtly, If we ſhould imagine both his Friends and Enemies, the report of Senſe oft-times repeated, to have been deceived in the Opinion of his Reſurrection, God hath been pleaſed to confirm the Truth of it, and to ſet his Seal to it. This he hath done not only by his Holy Spirit comforting, enabling, and encouraging the Apoſtles in Preaching the Myſtery of Chriſt's Reſurrection, but alſo in confirming their Teſtimony with concurrent Miracles. As it is, Acts IV. 33. *With great power gave the Apoſtles witneſs of the Reſurrection of the Lord Jeſus.* They openly affirmed it upon their own Knowledge, and then in Proof of the truth of their Affirmation wrought Signs and Miracles; which to the Spectators did as fully evince the Truth of the Relation, as if they had ſeen it done with their own Eyes; ſince it was impoſſible, that God ſhould exert his omnipotent Power, in working Miracles for the Atteſtation of a Lye. Thus much for the reality. I proceed in the ſecond place to the

II. Manner of the Reſurrection, expreſſed in thoſe words, *having looſed the pains*

Vol. 2. *of death*, which are variouſly interpreted; ſome maintaining that they imply only a Deliverance from Death, and reſcue from the Grave; others that they point out the dolorous Sufferings by which our Lord was brought to the Grave, and raiſing him up to a ſtate oppoſite to that Humiliation; a third ſort underſtanding by them a Deſtruction of the Power and Dominion of Death. All theſe Opinions are ſupported with great Reaſons; nor will it here be proper to enter into a ſtrict Examination which of them rather is to be embraced. They are all rational, Conſonant to the Deſign of the Apoſtle, and Significative of the manner of Chriſt's Reſurrection. I will therefore apply them all.

The firſt Opinion includeth only a Deliverance from Death, that is, a reunion of Soul and Body ſeparated by Death. In which Senſe it chiefly referreth to the words of *David*, and the Promiſes made to him, here alledged by the Apoſtle. *David* had been often brought by his Enemies into extreme danger of Death, which he commonly expreſſeth by the ſame or the like words, as Pſal. XVIII. 4. *The ſorrows of death compaſſed me*, and Ver. 5. *The ſorrows of hell compaſſed me about*, and Pſal. CXVI. 3. *The ſorrows of death compaſſed me, the pains of Hell gate hold upon me.* Yet truſting in the Promiſes of God, amidſt all theſe Calamities

Calamities he reſted aſſured of Deliverance, and expreſſeth his Confidence of it in the words cited by the Apoſtle in the following Verſes, *My fleſh ſhall reſt in hope; becauſe thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell, neither wilt thou ſuffer thine holy one to ſee Corruption.* Vol. 2.

It was a Matter at that time received, and on all hands granted by the Jews, that *David* was a Type of the Meſſias; that his Actions, Sufferings, and Deliverance prefigured the Office, the Death, and Reſurrection of Chriſt, who ſhould deſcend from him; and particularly the Apoſtle ſheweth, how this Paſſage was much more evidently and literally fulfilled in Chriſt than in *David*. He indeed was delivered from his Enemies and died in Peace; yet die he did, and after Death *his ſoul was left in hell*, that is, among the Dead, or in the place of departed Souls; *and his Body did ſee Corruption*, having been buried many hundred years. But as for Chriſt he died indeed, yet *his ſoul was not left in hell, neither did his Body ſee Corruption.* His Soul was preſently reunited to the Body, and even during the Separation not left by the Divine Nature, which ſtill continued to be joyned to it; neither was his Body corrupted, but raiſed up and united to the Soul in leſs than forty hours, in which time the Bodies of deceaſed Men are wont to be corrupted.

According to the ſecond Interpretation, Chriſt

Vol. 2. Chriſt was raiſed from a painful Death to an oppoſite State, to a condition of Glory, Happineſs, Power, and Immortality. The Sufferings of our Lord ſo lively deſcribed to us in the Holy Offices of the laſt week we cannot forget, and over all theſe he eminently triumphed in his Reſurrection upon this day. He was then made ſubject to Death, but is now become *the Lord of life*, and ſet above the reach of Death. *For Chriſt being raiſed from the Dead, dieth no more; Death hath no more Dominion over him*, Rom. VI. 9. He then bore the wrath of God for the ſake of Man. He now diſpenſeth the Favours of God granted to Men. He was then ſubjected to the Contradiction of Sinners, to the Will of his own Creatures, appeared as the vileſt of Men, ſuffered as a Malefactor; he is now entred upon his Kingdom, raiſed above the Earth, *ſeated at the right hand of God, Angels, and Authorities, and Powers being made ſubject unto him*, 1 Pet. III. 22.

The words explained in their third Senſe infer the overthrow of the Power and Dominion of Death, effected by the Reſurrection of Chriſt. The whole Deſign of our Lords Incarnation, of his Death, Burial and Reſurrection was, as it is expreſſed, Hebr. II. 14. *That he might deſtroy him that had the power of Death, that is the Devil.* To do this all the parts of his Life contributed.

He

He converted Sinners from the Error of their way. He confuted the miſtakes of the ſeduced World. He founded a Church wherein open Enmity ſhould be profeſſed to the Devil. He took upon himſelf the guilt of Death, due to the ſins of Men, and all this Diſpenſation he glorioufly finiſhed in his Reſurrection. Therein he literally *broke the bonds of Death*, he *led Captivity Captive*, baffled the oppoſition, and triumphed over all the Aſſaults of the Devil, who had vainly imagined, that by procuring the ever Bleſſed Jeſus to be given up into the hands of wicked Men, he had put an end to the Salvation of Mankind. But to our eternal Happineſs, and to the Glory of our Redeemer, his Deſigns and Attempts promoted that very end which he ſo much dreaded; he knew not that it was *the determinate counſel and foreknowledge of God*, as it is in the precedent Verſe, that Chriſt ſhould *both die and riſe again* to perfect our Salvation; that he was for a while to be ſubject to Death, but that *it was impoſſible he ſhould be holden of it.* Vol. 2.

III. This was the third thing propoſed to Diſcourſe of, that it was not poſſible that Chriſt ſhould continue in the ſtate of Death. The Apoſtle foundeth the *impoſſibility* of it in this place, upon the Determination of God to the contrary; ſo that here, *it was not poſſible*, is no more than it

was

Vol. 2. was not Conſonant to the decree of God; it was not fit, juſt, or convenient; as it is ſaid, Matth. IX. *It is not poſſible for the Children of the Bride-Chamber to mourn, as long as the Bridegroom is with them*; that is, it is not fit or convenient. In this Senſe then I ſhall conſider it; and

1. *It was not poſſible* or convenient, *that Chriſt ſhould be holden of death*, becauſe he was both God and Man; the Divine was united to his Humane Nature. It would have appeared ſurprizing to our Reaſon, and been an Argument of little affection of God to Mankind, if he ſhould have ſuffered that very Body, which had the Honour to be joyned to his own Nature, wherein *the fulneſs of the Godhead dwelled bodily*, to continue in Hell, in the common ſtate of Mortality, or *to ſee Corruption*. *It was not poſſible* that the Divinity ſhould ſuffer that Nature to be corrupted, or lye neglected among the Dead; to which it ſelf continued to be united even in the Grave. This we of the Catholick Church do believe; and if any ſhould oppoſe this wonderful Union of the Divine and Humane Nature in the perſon of Chriſt, his very Reſurrection will convince their Error. For to raiſe a dead Body to Life again, muſt be allowed to be no leſs than the work of Omnipotence, that it can be effected by God alone. Yet it appeareth from the

the expreſs words of Scripture, that Chriſt had Power to raiſe up his own Body. He ſaith of himſelf to the Jews, John II. 19. *Deſtroy this Temple, and in three days I will raiſe it up: Speaking of the Temple of his Body*, as the Evangeliſt ſubjoyns. And again, John X. 18. *No Man taketh my Life from me, but I lay it down of my ſelf. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.* Our Lord, who came into the World to do the Will of his Father, and to glorifie him, would never have claimed this Power, had it not been inherent in himſelf. He therefore by his own Power reunited his Soul to his Body. I mean not in Excluſion to the other perſons of the bleſſed Trinity, who all concurred therein. For, Power being an eſſential Attribute of the Divine Nature, continueth undivided in the Perſons of it. And therefore it is no Objection againſt the Truth of this, that the Father is ſaid in many places of the New Teſtament to have raiſed up his Son; ſince he is the chief Perſon in that Bleſſed Trinity, by whoſe Power the Soul of Chriſt was rejoyned to the Body. Vol. 2.

2. Chriſt was the Author of our Salvation, the Founder of a revealed Religion; and therefore *it was not poſſible*, not convenient *he ſhould be holden of death*. The Reſurrection of Chriſt was to be the ultimate and chief Proof of the Divinity of his

Vol. 2. his Miſſion, and Authority of his Revelations; ſo clear a Teſtimony, that the Reaſon of Man ſhould not be able to withſtand the Evidence thereof. To this therefore he at all times refers, as to the laſt and greateſt Proof of his Miſſion. This was the only Sign which he would give to the Jews demanding a Miracle in Confirmation of his Authority, *that as* Jonas *was three days and three nights in the Belly of the Whale, ſo the Son of Man ſhould be three days and three nights in the heart of the Earth.* Upon this he had fixed the Expectation of his Diſciples, and of all his Hearers; and by this he was to ſet the Truth of his Doctrine, and the Divinity of his Perſon, beyond all Contradiction.

Had he left his Body in the Grave after all theſe Aſſurances, the Jews might have inſulted over his Diſciples with as much Reaſon, as Chriſtians do over the Followers of *Mahomet*, who promiſed to riſe again after a Thouſand years; little imagining that his Name or Religion ſhould continue ſo long in the World; although now after more than a Thouſand years expired, the Impoſtor ſtill lieth in Hell. Had *Chriſt not riſen again*, the Apoſtle confeſſeth, 1 Cor. XV. 14. *Their preaching had been vain, and your faith alſo vain.* But when ſo illuſtrious a Teſtimony of Divine Authority hath intervened; when Heaven it ſelf

hath

hath declared it ſo eminently; to deny Aſſent would be to *fight againſt God.* Vol. 2.

The Jews, in the moſt violent Execution of their Hatred and Malice, engaged *to believe on him, if he would come down from the Croſs and ſave himſelf.* It had been no leſs eaſie for our Bleſſed Lord to have deſcended from the Croſs, than to have aſcended from the Grave. But firſt the Deſign of his Sufferings did not permit it, ſince he was to lay down his Life as an Expiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of the World; and then he would not ſuffer the Exerciſe of Divine Power manifeſted in reſtoring himſelf to Life, to Labour under any doubts. Had he deſcended from the Croſs before he died, he could not have attoned for the Guilt of our ſin. Had he deſcended immediately after his Death, it would have been pretended that he had not died; yet even this they would have Confeſſed to be miraculous, but perhaps referred the Cauſe of it, as they did his former Miracles, not to a Divine Power, but to Magical Operation. Whereas this Pretence did wholly vaniſh in the Miracle of his Reſurrection: Since no Magick or Diabolick Power remaineth after Death.

In ſhort, ſo great was the Evidence of the Divinity of Chriſt ariſing from his Reſurrection, ſo undeniable the Fact, and ſo important, that the Apoſtles in all their Ser-

mons

Vol. 2. mons imployed this as the chief Argument of Conviction: And when they chose *Matthias* to the Apostleship, described his Office to be no other, than *to witness the Resurrection* of Christ.

God had more than once before his Crucifixion, declared him by Voices from Heaven, by constant Miracles to be his Son; yet so far is the Evidence of this inferiour to that Proceeding from his Resurrection, that he is in many places said to have then adopted Christ for his Son, because he then eminently declared him to be so. As Acts xiii. 33. *The Promise made unto the Fathers God hath fulfilled, in that he hath raised up Jesus again*, as it is in the Psalm, II. *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* And Rom. I. 4. *Jesus Christ our Lord declared to be the Son of God with Power, by the Resurrection from the dead.* He was from all Eternity his Son as to his Divine Nature, he was from the Incarnation his Son as to his Humane Nature, but the Truth of this appeared to the world chiefly in his Resurrection.

3. By the Resurrection of Christ we are assured chiefly that we also shall rise again, and therefore, it was not convenient *that he should be holden of Death.* Christ had promised to his Disciples, That *where he was, there they should be also.* When he therefore rose from the Dead, and ascended into an incorruptible State of Glory, they then raised

raiſed their Hopes, and conceived full aſſu- Vol. 2.
rance of Immortality. Till then, Mankind had found by long Experience that there was no Redemption from the Grave; and by this alone could be convinced, that either their Nature was capable of Immortality, or that God would vouchſafe to confer it on them. They might perceive in the Perſon of Chriſt the Diſſolution of Death, the Capacity of their Nature, and the Favour of God; and then conſidering their own Relation to Chriſt, might hope to partake of the ſame Happineſs. Chriſt is the Head of his Church, and what more natural than for the Members to follow their Head? He was *by his Reſurrection* declared *to be the Son of God*; and himſelf hath often promiſed that his faithful Followers ſhould be Co-heirs with him. He is called *the firſt born from the Dead, the firſt fruits of his Reſurrection*; which being accepted by God, Entitled the whole Maſs, the whole race of Mankind, to the ſame Favour.

Only it is required, and that juſtly, if that we deſire to follow him in his Reſurrection, we muſt alſo imitate him in his Death. For ſo the Promiſe runs in the whole VI. Chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*. For *if we have been planted together in the likeneſs of his Death, we ſhall be alſo in the likeneſs of his Reſurrection.* If

Vol .2. we crucifie our Sin, as it is there expreſſed, if we as fully forſake all vicious Habits, as he who dieth is bereaved of vital Actions; if farther, we imitate the Death of Chriſt in the Perfection of it, that *as he died but once, but liveth for ever; ſo we* hence forward be *dead unto ſin, but alive unto righteouſneſs*, then we may reaſonably aſſure our ſelves, that we ſhall follow the Example of him the forerunner in our Reſurrection, which we have ſo nearly expreſſed in our Death; we are then truly Members of himſelf the Head, *being made conformable to his Sufferings*; we are ſanctified by the gracious Acceptation and raiſing up of him, *the firſt fruits of them that ſlept*, while we inviolably continue our Relation to him. Others indeed were before him raiſed from Dead to Life, as thoſe raiſed by *Elijah*, *Eliſhah*, and by Chriſt before and at his Crucifixion. But theſe were all to die again, and ſo thereby gave no aſſurance of immortality to Mankind. It was Chriſt alone, *who being raiſed from the dead, dieth no more*, who in behalf of Mankind hath taken Poſſeſſion of immortality, which he hath acquired for us, & will communicate to us, unleſs we chuſe rather to imitate the imperfect Reſurrection of thoſe mortal Men before mentioned, that is, unleſs we riſe from Sin to die again.

Laſtly, the Juſtice of God, and the incomparable

comparable Humility and Patience of Christ manifested in his Sufferings, rendred *it not possible*, not fit *that he should be holden of Death.* He died not for his own but for the Sins of others; and to demonstrate that his own Guilt drew not that Punishment upon him, it was agreeable to the Justice of God to raise him up, to relieve the Cause of oppressed Innocence, and not suffer his Persecutors any longer to triumph in their wickedness. Further, by his exact Obedience, by his inimitable Patience in suffering the Pains, and his admirable Humility in undergoing the Shame of the Cross, he did deserve to be raised up, that as he had humbled himself in so extraordinary a manner, so he should be exalted to a no less illustrious Glory. And therefore the Sufferings and Humility of Christ are frequently assigned as the meritorious Cause of his Exaltation. It was long before Propheſied of him, Psal. CX. 7. *He shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall he lift up his head.* And after his Passion and Ascension it is said of him by St. *Paul*, Philip. II. *He humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.*

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The first step of his Exaltation was his Resurrection; which therefore was to relate to both those parts of his Humane Nature, which had undergone that meritori-

Vol. 2. ous Humiliation. Not only his Soul had ſuffered Agonies *and the Contradiction of ſinners*; had reſigned it ſelf intirely into the hands of God, and ſubmitted quietly to the Execution of that bitter Sentence, which was inflicted on him as the Repreſentative of ſinful Men; had endured the Shame of the Croſs, the inſult of his Enemies, a violent Separation from the Body with invincible Patience and Charity: But alſo his Body had partaken in his Agony, had ſweat drops of Blood, had endured Scourgings and Buffetings, Crucifixion, and the wound of the Spear. Both Soul and Body therefore were to ſhare in the Reward of all theſe Sufferings, which began to be beſtowed on him in his Reſurrection. His Body was to be raiſed from the Grave; and his Soul, being in no other Senſe capable of Reſurrection, was to be reunited to the Body, and both to continue for ever joyned; ſince by his Death and Reſurrection he is become the Mediator of a new and eternal Covenant.

Thus I have paſſed through the ſeveral parts of the Text: and from the whole I ſhall make but one Inference, proper to the Solemnity of this day. If the Reſurrection of Chriſt be the great and ultimate Confirmation of the Chriſtian Religion; that upon which our Faith is founded, our hopes are raiſed; that by which the

Myſtery

Myſtery of our Redemption is compleated, the Author of it Crowned and advanced to be the Head of all the faithful who look for the ſame Reſurrection; it becomes us to celebrate this Feſtival Dedicated to the Memory of it with a ſuitable Religion. Vol. 2.

We are not to account it an Arbitrary inſtitution or the invention of the Church, that this day is accounted Sacred beyond all others of the Year. Our Lord hath made it ſo, by riſing from the Dead, and compleating the Redemption of Mankind on it. No revealed Religion was yet ever profeſſed in the World, which did not celebrate ſome certain and Solemn Feſtivals at fixed times of the year; and to caſt off the publick Solemnization of thoſe Feſtivals, upon which the moſt illuſtrious Acts of the Life of our Saviour were performed, is no other, than in Fact to deny all belief in him, and relation to him. It is not enough to ſay that he hath declared, he will be *worſhipped in Spirit and Truth.* He was himſelf then going up to *Jeruſalem* to celebrate a ſolemn Feſtival, when he ſpake thoſe words. And ſurely unleſs there be ſolemn times and places of worſhipping him *in Spirit and Truth*, it will never appear that he is ſo worſhipped; nor is he worſhipped in *Truth*, when Men pay no external Acknowledgments of thoſe eminent Benefits, which he hath truly obtained to them.

Vol. 2. Himſelf hath conſecrated this day by his riſing from the Grave on it. The Apoſtles have Dedicated it to this ſacred Uſe, by their own, and by Divine Authority. The Jews had before celebrated one day in ſeven, in Recognition of their adoring that God, who had created the World in Six days, and reſted on the Seventh; and that Seventh day which they celebrated rather than any other of the Week, was ſanctified in Memory of their Deliverance out of *Egypt*, wrought upon that day, as it is, Deut. V. 15. *Remember that thou waſt a Servant in the Land of Egypt; and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by a ſtretched out arm. Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.* As the Jews therefore dated their Seventh day for ever from that day of their Deliverance out of *Egypt*; ſo the Apoſtles began, and the Church hath to this day continued to date their Seventh day from the day upon which their Redemption was compleated. A Redemption ſo far greater than that given to the Jews from the Bondage of *Egypt*; that well might the day inſtituted in remembrance of their Deliverance, give way to the day celebrated in Honour of our Redemption.

This change therefore was made by the Apoſtles immediately upon the Reſurrection

ction of our Lord, and even before his Aſcenſion,& ſo no doubt by his perſonal Direction and Approbation. For all the religious Aſſemblies we find of them,both before and after his Aſcenſion, were upon *the firſt day of the Week*.That ſo,as the Jews acknowledged their belief inGod theCreator of the World, by celebrating one day in ſeven; and manifeſted their Worſhip of that God,who brought them out of *Egypt*, by Solemnizing for ever that Seventh day, in which he brought them out: So we Chriſtians ſhould declare, that we worſhip the ſame God the Creator of the World, by celebrating one day in ſeven; and alſo manifeſt that we worſhip him in and through Jeſus Chriſt, by Sanctifying for ever that Seventh day,upon which the great and laſt Act of our Redemption wrought by him was performed, which is therefore in Scripture called *the Lords Day*, Rev. I. 10. Vol. 2.

Farther, as the particular Day of the weekly Feſtival of the Jews was determined by their Deliverance out of *Egypt*, wrought upon the Seventh day; ſo the far greateſt of their Annual Solemnities was inſtituted in Commemoration of that Deliverance effected in the firſt Month of the year. This God did inſtitute by a ſpecial Command,which was at larged repeat-

Vol. 2. ed to you in the first Lesson of this day: And exacted the Observation of it with so great Rigour, that he declared, *That Soul which did not keep this annual Feast should be cut off from* Israel. And can we imagine that God should require such eminent external Testimonies of Gratitude from the Jews, for Deliverance from a temporal corporeal Bondage; and leave us without any Obligation of rendring publick and solemn Honour to him for freeing us from a spiritual and eternal Slavery? The Redemption wrought by Christ, is to us what the Deliverance out of *Egypt* was to the Jews. The Feast of *Easter* instituted in the remembrance of the Completion of that Redemption, is to us what the Feast of the Passover was to them, appointed in Memory of their Deliverance. *Christ is our Passover*, as we heard this Morning from 1 Cor. V. *Let us therefore keep the Feast.*

The Determination of our Christian Festival is to be taken from the most illustrious Actions of Christ our Redeemer; and when they are determined, they are to be celebrated with no less Religion than were the Festivals of the Jews; nay rather with greater Expressions of Joy, Gratitude and Devotion, because they Commemorate far greater Benefits. That this Festival therefore was particularly instituted by the Apostles,

ſtles, thoſe words of St. *Paul* do not ob- Vol. 2.
ſcurely intimate, but the Practice of the
univerſal Church immediately after their
times do moſt evidently manifeſt it. Scarce
was St. *John*, the laſt Liver of the Apoſtles,
Dead, when the Eaſtern and Weſtern
Churches began to divide about the time
of Solemnizing *Eaſter*; not whether it
ſhould be ſolemnized, but whether it ſhould
be a fixed or a moveable Feaſt, both con-
tending for their own Cuſtom, as for an
eſſential Point of Religion; in that indeed
ſtraining a Circumſtance too far, but clear-
ly proving thereby, that the ſolemn Obſer-
vation of *Eaſter*, was then by all Chriſtians
accounted an eſſential Inſtitution of Reli-
gion, in that they eſteemed it unlawful to
vary the leaſt Circumſtance formerly re-
ceived in the Obſervation of it.

And as this Feſtival hath ſucceeded in-
ſtead of the Jewiſh Paſſover, which did
prefigure the whole Myſtery of our Re-
demption; ſo the due manner of our Ce-
lebration of it was typified by the Cere-
monies preſcribed by God to them, in eat-
ing the Paſchal Lamb. As they were com-
manded to remove all Leaven out of their
Houſes; ſo we are to *put away the Leaven of
Malice and Wickedneſs*, in the words of
St. *Paul*. As they then ſung Hymns of
Thankſgiving to God for their Deliverance

out

Vol. 2. out of *Egypt*; ſo we ought to give Praiſe and Glory to God for conſummating our Redemption by the Reſurrection of our Lord upon this day. As they eat the Paſchal Lamb with bitter Herbs, in a Habit and Poſture expreſſing their readineſs to go out of *Egypt*, with great Teſtimonies of rejoycing and mutual Kindneſs: So we ſhould receive the Elements of Bread and Wine, repreſenting the Sacrifice of Chriſt the Lamb of God, once offered upon the Croſs for the ſins of the whole World, (which is the chief and moſt ſolemn Act of our Worſhip to be paid upon this day,) with a bitter Repentance and Sorrow for paſt ſins; with a ſteadfaſt reliance upon the Promiſes of God, with a perfect Submiſſion to his Will, and readineſs to go wherever he ſhall lead us; with a ſincere Charity towards one another, and to all the Members of Mankind for whom Chriſt died, that is, for all Men without Exception; and with the moſt intenſe Thankſgiving that our Souls can form, for all the Benefits of our Redemption; but more particularly for raiſing to Life, as upon this day, him, who *died for our ſins, and roſe again for our Juſtification.* So by worthily Celebrating here on Earth the Memory of the glorious Reſurrection of our Lord, we ſhall obtain to be heafter admitted

mitted to follow the Example of his Re- Vol. 2.
surrection, and ſhare in the Glory which he now enjoys in Heaven. *Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, for the ſake of him who died and roſe again, our* Lord *and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; to whom with the Father,* &c.

The

The Fifteenth SERMON.

Preach'd on *April* 5*th*.

1690.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

1 Tim. II. 8.

I will therefore, that Men pray every where, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.

PRAYER being one of the greateſt Duties of a Chriſtian Life; that whereby we chiefly pay our Adoration to God, whereby we obtain the Remiſſion of our Sins, & the Relief of our Neceſſities; to which ſo many Promiſes are annexed, and ſo frequent Exhortation to the Practice of it to be found in Scripture; we ought to be well inſtructed in the Nature, the Neceſſity, and the Conditions of it. To effect this was the chief Intention of the Apoſtle in this whole Chapter, in which this Verſe being more comprehenſive than the reſt,

I have choſen it for the Subject of my intended Diſcourſe of Prayer. In it the words eaſily direct me to inſiſt on theſe Four Heads. Vol. 2.

I. The Duty of Prayer, *I will that Men pray.*

II. The Place of it, *Every where.*

III. The poſture of Prayer, *Lifting up their hands.*

IV. The Conditions required to make it acceptable and effectual, *Lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.*

I. the Duty of Prayer is expreſly commanded in the firſt words: *I will*, &c.

To inforce the Authority of which Command the Apoſtle ſaith in the former Verſe, that he was *ordained a Preacher, an Apoſtle and Teacher of the Gentiles*, acted herein by Divine Commiſſion. And ſurely it was no light matter, when the Apoſtle, whoſe Authority was long ſince received in all the Churches founded by him, thought fit to produce his Commiſſion, before he impoſed the Command; a Command, not firſt introduced by him, but often repeated by our Lord himſelf, who taught his Diſciples a Form of Prayer, and injoyned them *to watch and pray.* But ſince none (as I ſuppoſe) will diſpute the Command, or deny the Authority of it; it will be of more advantage to ſhew the reaſonableneſs and the uſe of Prayer: Which I proceed to do.

Firſt,

Vol. 2. First then, Prayer is the principal Act of Adoration paid by Man to God, and upon that account becomes neceſſary to us. Man being the Creature of God, at firſt produced out of nothing by his Almighty Power, and afterward all his Life long depending on his Providence, and maintained by him, oweth to God all that Service, which he is capable to pay; and that is no other, than to adore his Majeſty, to acknowledge his Power, to celebrate his Praiſes, to admire his infinite Perfections, in all things, to own his dependance on him, to profeſs himſelf the Creature, the Servant, the Subject of God, and to behave himſelf as ſuch.

This is all, which Man can pay to God for thoſe infinite Benefits, which he hath received from him: God hath no Intereſts of his own to be promoted by us. The Infinity of his Nature hath ſet him beyond all want of external Aids, and even beyond all increaſe of Happineſs; even that Glory, which he receiveth from our Worſhip, is of no advantage to him; yet is it not the leſs required of us, ſince it declares our Conviction of that Gratitude, Subjection and Obedience, which are due to his Benefits and his Power; that Honour, Worſhip and Reverence, which belong to the infinite perfection of his Nature.

Adoration then conſiſts as well in acknowledging and reverencing the Perfections

fections of the Divine Nature abſolutely conſidered, as in profeſſing our Subjection toGod, conſidered as the Author of our Being, and all thoſe Benefits, which we either do already enjoy, or hope hereafter to receive. In both theſe Reſpects Prayer is the moſt natural and ſignificant manner of Adoration. For by it we profeſs our Wants, of which we deſire relief: We thereby confeſs our ſelves finite and imperfect Creatures: We proclaim our ſelves the Dependants of God, from whom we beg the Supply of our Wants: we confeſs our Belief of his All-ſufficiency, from whom we expect the relief of all our Neceſſities; of his infinite Goodneſs, whence we raiſe ourHopes that he will grant ourPetitions; of his Almighty Power, by which we are aſſured that he can effect our Deſires. All theſe Acknowledgments are neceſſarily included in allPetitions for ſupply ofWants, which are the moſt ordinary ſubject of Prayer. For he who addreſſeth himſelf to another for the relief of any Wants, therein confeſſeth there is ſomewhat wanting to his own Perfection; that the Perſon to whom he maketh this Addreſs, is not only in being, (for otherwiſe all addreſs to him would be frivolous) but alſo able to relieve him. If in all Caſes and Wants he betakes himſelf to that Remedy, he plainly ſuppoſeth that Being, from whence he hopeth

Vol. 2.

Vol. 2. hopeth relief, to be All-ſufficient, and the Fountain of all Good.

In Confeſſions of ſin, and Supplications of pardon, which among Perſons eſpecially profeſſing revealed Religions are wont to conſtitute no ſmall part of Prayer; the Power and Government of God, and the ſubjection of Man to him is more eminently acknowledged. For from whence can this Confeſſion and intreaty of Pardon proceed, but from a Senſe, that every ſin is a violation of that Subjection, which is due to God; that the Sinner is hereby ſubject to the execution of the Divine Revenge, and that it will certainly follow, unleſs it be averted by obtaining of Pardon? Further it ſuppoſeth God to be indued with infinite Goodneſs and Mercy; otherwiſe all ſuch Intreaties would be but vain; ſince it can be no leſs than an infinite Mercy, which can Pardon an offence againſt an infinite Majeſty. In both Caſes, and in all other Forms of Prayer, Man owneth himſelf to be the Creature and dependant of God, even by making Application to him.

But that which chiefly manifeſts that Conviction which all Supplicants have of the Majeſty and infinity of God, is that they direct their Prayers to him, altho' inviſible, and with the ſame aſſurance of being heard in all places. Whence they evidently declare, that they believe God to be Omni-

Omnipreſent, and to know all things. Vol. 2.
And ſince the natural reaſon of Men tells them, that none but God poſſeſſes thoſe Perfections, they thereby teſtifie their belief, that he to whom they direct their Prayers, is no other than God; that he is endued with all poſſible Perfections, that he is the ſupreme Lord of all, and extendeth the influences and efficacy of his Attributes, ſuch as Power, Knowledge, Goodneſs and the like, to all places at the ſame time; that is, that he is Omnipreſent.

And this alone, if nothing elſe were to be conſidered, will make all manner of Prayer to be a true and proper Act of Adoration, ſuch as is due to none but God; nor can be paid to any Being, without ſuppoſing it to poſſeſs truly the Divine Attributes, that is, without ſuppoſing it to be truly God. For it is unreaſonable to imagine, that any Man directing his Prayers to any Being, ſhould not believe at the ſame time that he is heard by it; nor do any pretend to it. They who addreſs their Prayers to Saints and Angels, acknowledge themſelves to believe that they are heard by them: Which ſince it cannot be, without believing at the ſame time that they know all things, and are preſent in all places; Attributes peculiar to God alone; it cannot be avoided, but that in praying to them they muſt be ſuppoſed to own

Vol. 2. them to be so many Gods, and every Petition is a true and proper Act of Divine Adoration given to them. Justly therefore doth the Psalmist say, *Thou that hearest the Prayers, unto thee shall all flesh come.* Thou only, O God, hearest the Prayers of Men; therefore to thee only shall they direct their Prayers.

Thus Prayer, in the very Nature of it, is an Act of Adoration, and an Acknowledgment of the infinite Perfections of God, and our dependance on him, altho no such explicite Acknowledgment be made in it. This will be more evident, if we consider the general Form of Prayers received in all Ages, and in all Religions. Not only in the Christian Religion, and in those excellent Forms of Prayer, of which the Liturgy of our Church is composed, but among all Nations, among the Jews and Heathens, Men have been wont in the beginning of their Prayers, at least in some part of them, to confess the Authority of God, and their own Subjection to him, and more especially to magnifie those Attributes, the benefit of which they then implored.

If they desired Pardon, they magnified the Greatness of his Mercy, and the guilt of their own Sins committed in contempt of his Authority. If they begged extraordinary Relief and Assistance in any Emergencies,

gencies, they declared their Opinion of his unlimited Power and Goodneſs; if in general any Favours, they confeſſed at the ſame time their dependance on him. Vol. 2.

Nor is it eaſie to find, either in the Old Teſtament, or in the Writings of Heathens, (in both which a great number of Prayers is to be found,) any, wherein ſuch expreſs words of Adoration are omitted. The firſt formal Prayer which we find in the Old Teſtament, is that of *Abraham* in *Gen.* XVIII. for the Deliverance of *Sodom* from the Deſtruction intended by God. And therein the Supplicant doth more than once acknowledge his own unworthineſs, and the Power and Juſtice of God; that himſelf was but *duſt and aſhes*; that God was *the Judge of the whole earth*, and could not Act any otherwiſe than juſtly. The Prayers of the Heathens generally began with what in our Language is, *O Almighty God*, *and O moſt merciful God.* And that moſt excellent Form of Prayer, which our Lord gave his Diſciples, and intended as well for a Pattern, as for a Form to us, both beginneth and endeth with an expreſs Adoration of God. In the beginning we confeſs him to be our Father, the Author of our Life and Fountain of our Happineſs; that he dwells in the higheſt Heavens, and from thence doth govern the Earth. In the end we profeſs, that to

Vol. 2. him belongeth *the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever*; that he is the ſupreme Governor of the World, and of all Mankind; that he poſſeſſes infinite Power; that Glory belongeth to him, and ought to be rendred to him; that all theſe Perfections are eternal in him.

Further, if every Supplicant to God doth therein by conſequence adore him, and all received Forms of Prayer do expreſly include an Act and Confeſſion of Worſhip, much more doth a fervent and devout Soul, which prayeth to God in the moſt perfect and excellent manner, truly adore him at the ſame time. For he who prayeth, as he ought to pray, doth at the ſame time ſubmit himſelf to the Divine Will, with the moſt abſolute Complacency and Subjection which his Soul can Form; conceives himſelf to be ſo far the Creature, that he is *as nothing in reſpect of God*; as ſuch, wholly devotes himſelf to him, and depends not only upon his Power for the execution of his Deſire, but alſo upon his good Pleaſure for the Grant, and upon his Wiſdom for the convenience of it: In imitation of our Lord, who, in his admirable Tranſport of Devotions in the Garden, committed his requeſt to the Will of God, with an intire Subjection. And all this put together is the moſt intenſe Act of Adoration, which Man can pay to God.

Add

Add to this, that humble posture of Body, which Men of all Ages and Religions have been wont to use in Prayer; and it will appear, that Prayer is in all Respects a compleat Act of Worship. Men have differed indeed as to the particular Posture, some using Prostration, others stretching out the Hands, and most Kneeling; but in this all have agreed, that that Posture was to be employed, which might best denote the Subjection of the Supplicant to God. But the farther Consideration of this belongs to the third Head proposed. Vol. 2.

Upon the whole it is manifest, that Prayer is the most natural, and most expressive Act of Worship. And if so, the same necessity, which we before shew to lye upon us of adoring God, will also require us to offer up Prayers to him. And as our Subjection to God, and other Reasons, for which we owe Adoration to him, always continue the same, and equally oblige a Man in every part of his Life; so Prayer for the same Reasons ought to be continually addressed to him, altho' we have many times no particular Wants which we desire to be supplied by him.

Prayer as an Act of Worship, is a Debt at all times due to God, and as such is also founded upon eternal Reasons which admit no change. Our dependance upon God always continueth the same; the same in-

Vol. 2. finite Perfections are invariably poſſeſſed by him; the ſame Relation between God and Man perſiſts unalterable. Adoration therefore is in almoſt all Caſes to be formed upon the ſame Conceptions, to be raiſed by the ſame Conſiderations, to be founded upon the ſame Reaſons, to conſiſt in the ſame Operations of Soul and Body. So that altho' it be repeated in the ſame manner ten thouſand times, it is no more than what is the Duty of Man to do, no more than what is reaſonable; and a rational Man can no more alter the Thoughts upon which Adoration is founded, than he can the eternal Cauſes, upon which thoſe Thoughts are raiſed. No wonder then, that in all well conſtituted Churches the publick Forms of Prayer, whereby Men worſhip God, always continue the ſame, are over and over again repeated every day, oft-times a day; and that for many Ages together. For it cannot be denied, that we owe Worſhip to God every day, every part of the day; altho' the Neceſſities of Life require, that not all but ſome certain fixed times be employed in it. This Worſhip is to proceed upon the ſame Reaſons. In adoring God we confeſs our ſelves his Creatures, we acknowledge his Supreme Authority, we implore his Mercy, we ſollicit his Goodneſs. When we worſhip him a ſecond time,

time, the ſame Thoughts return; if a third time, 'tis but the renewal of the ſame Conceptions. What then can be more reaſonable, than that the words of Prayer, which we employ in this Act of Adoration, ſhould always continue the ſame? Vol. 2.

It is therefore a moſt unreaſonable Objection againſt ſet Forms of Prayer, that in them the ſame words are repeated again and again every day. For is not God to be worſhipped again and again? Are not his infinite Attributes deſerving Adoration, the ſame yeſterday, to day and for ever? Can our Conceptions be really changed, while the Object remains the ſame? Have theſe Perſons diſcovered new Perfections in God, or new Foundations of Worſhip, ſince the laſt Act of it? Do they believe, that God continually affects new Complements and new Harangues; that there is any Vertue in the words themſelves, or any Magical force in the Variation of them? That were to eſpouſe the very groſſeſt Error of the Heathens, which our Lord reprehendeth in the VI. of St. *Matthew*, who placed the Efficacy of their Prayers not in the Devotion of the Heart, but in the Vertue and multitude of their Words.

Yet cannot this Error be avoided by thoſe who cry up the neceſſity of extempore Prayer, or frequent change in it. For ſince the Internal Conceptions of the

Vol. 2. Mind, in the Act of Adoration, being founded upon the eternal Attributes of God, always continue the ſame; to what Purpoſe is any change in the external words, unleſs there be ſome ſecret Vertue in the words themſelves? If they pretend, that this change more effectually promotes the Devotion of the Hearer; it is ſo far from true, that it rendreth all true Devotion abſolutely impoſſible to the Hearers. For in hearing a Prayer before unknown and unheard of, even an underſtanding Man, and of quick Apprehenſion can do no more than ſingly examine every Sentence of the Prayer he heareth, whether he may ſafely joyn in it; leaſt perhaps any Blaſphemy, or Folly, or Indecency ſhould be contained in it. As ſoon as one Sentence is thus examined, a ſecond Preſents it ſelf, and then a third; ſo that an intelligent Auditor, attending only to examine by parts the Prayer he heareth, hath no leiſure to pray to God, or in praying to adore him. And if the Devotion of a knowing Man be thus defeated, an Auditor of lower Capacities will never be able to form in his Mind ſuch a rational Devotion as becometh the Soul of Man, and will wholly employ himſelf in diverting his Fancy with ſome new and ſurprizing Sentence, and expecting what next ſhall follow.

Whereas in ſet and known Forms of Prayer,

Prayer, the devout Hearer is before assured of the Lawfulness and Decency of the Prayer; and his Mind, being at rest upon that account, attends wholly to form all those Acts of Devotion and Worship in the Soul, which the words of the Prayer express: and therein receiveth extraordinary Assistance, in that the Mind being accustomed to that Form of Prayer, hath through long use formed noble Conceptions of God upon the hearing of some words, and raised intense Affections upon others; conceived an hearty Sorrow of sin upon these, and been excited to a most profound Reverence of God by the hearing of those words. The Soul having affixed all these Thoughts and Acts to those several Words and Sentences of the received Form of Prayer, the same affections and thoughts will easily recur as often as the words of the Prayer are repeated, and immediately create a real Devotion in the Soul, which hath by frequent hearing and Meditation of those words fully attained the whole Scope of them, and long since received deep Impressions from them. By this Benefit, the devout Members of the Church, are enabled and directed to put themselves in a certain method of Devotion and Worship; which mightily facilitates their Conceptions, removes their Distractions, and leaves them free to attend to that alone, on which they are then employed. Vol. 2.

This

This alone ought to recommend the Duty of Prayer, and frequency of it to Mankind, that it makes up the principal part of the positive Worship of God. Yet this Consideration will perhaps be more persuasive, that it produceth great Advantages and Benefits to Men; which are so amplified in Scripture, by the many Promises of granting to devout Supplicants whatsoever they shall desire, by the frequent Examples of the wonderful Deliverances and Benefits obtained by Prayer; that 'tis almost impossible the Duty should be neglected by any, who are not either devoid of Faith, or regardless of their own Interest.

It is not only Promised by Christ, That *whatsoever Men shall ask in his name, shall be given to them*; That *if they have Faith, nothing* which they desire *shall be impossible to them*; That *the door shall be open to them that knock*; That *the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much*, even to obtain more than is included in the ordinary and general Promises of God, as is there illustrated by Examples: But God hath also been pleased to represent himself as labouring under the ordinary Passions and Infirmities of Men, who often Grant what they had not designed, to avoid the restless importunity of the Petitioner; that so no Sense of his own unworthiness might discourage Man from applying himself

ſelf to God by Prayer. Thus *Luke* XI. our Lord deſcribeth God under the Parable of an Houſholder, who altho' he would not lend to his Neighbour upon the account of Friendſhip, yet did it to ſatisfie *his Importunity*. And *Luke* XVIII. he reſembleth God to *an unjuſt Judge*, who altho' he would not do Juſtice to the poor Widow for Juſtice ſake, as *who neither feared God, nor regarded Man*, yet did it to be rid of her troubleſome Importunity. Vol. 2.

Theſe Repreſentations may perhaps appear ſurprizing, it being unaccountable, that God ſhould diſpenſe his Favours without reſpect to the Merits of the Petitioners, and impoſſible that he ſhould fall under any Temptations common to Man. Yet if we look a little nearer, we ſhall find this whole Conduct agreeable to the Juſtice and Wiſdom of God. God indeed beſtows not any Favours but upon the worthy Receivers. He hath affixed certain Conditions to all his Gifts, and will not ſeparate them in favour of any one. He ever giveth Judgment according to the Merits of Cauſes, and is deaf to the Prayers of wicked Men, yet granteth many Petitions to the Importunity of the Petitioners, which without that Importunity would never have been obtained.

For he who prayeth importunately to God, doth thereby qualifie himſelf for his Favour; ſince it cannot eaſily be conceived, that

Vol. 2. that any Man ſhould addreſs himſelf by frequent and fervent Prayer to God, and not at the ſame time purge his Conſcience from every Sin, which may obſtruct the Grant of his Deſire. And herein his Care will be no leſs intenſe, than is his Deſire of what he then requeſteth. His very addreſſing himſelf to God, manifeſts that he believeth him to be the Fountain of all Good, that he is convinced of his Power and Goodneſs, that he depends upon him, and founds the hopes of his Happineſs in his Favour. If the Prayer be often repeated, as is always in Caſes of Importunity, the Soul doth thereby contract an habit of Piety, of thinking upon God, and ſubmitting to his Power, of fearing him, and depending on him. And when Man by the uſe of Prayer is brought to this Diſpoſition, no wonder that God ſhould then grant to him what at firſt he was unworthy of, and then indulge to him the Rewards of the Faithful, ſince he is now become as one of the Faithful. Thus Prayer hath a natural Efficacy to reform the Mind of Man, to expel Prophaneſs, Infidelity and the contempt of God, and to introduce all thoſe Vertues, which will at laſt give a juſt Claim of Divine Favour to him.

Man by preſenting himſelf to God in Prayer, doth accuſtom his Mind to juſt Conceptions of his Power, his Goodneſs and

and his Command over us; doth imprint therein an awful regard of his Majesty. After many Resolutions formed and renewed in Prayer, he findeth the very inclinations of his Will changed: What at first he did but coldly desire, after many Reflections on the worth of it he vehemently affects; what at first he was but lightly perswaded of, after many Professions he is fully convinced of; what in the beginning was but a weak impression of Mind, after frequent Iteration of the same thoughts becometh a well fixed Habit. It must be an unnatural sort of Perverseness, which dares to invoke the name of God in Prayer, to confess therein his Justice, Power and Omnipresence, and yet immediately Affront them all; which can desire the Favour of God by frequent Petitions, and yet oppose him by constant Rebellions. The Minds of very few Persons are capable of such monstrous wickedness. And upon this account Prayer is not only a Duty of Man already pious and religious, but also an effectual method to make Men such; which when it is once performed, they then become qualified to receive the Benefit of all those illustrious Promises, which are annexed to Prayer. Vol. 2.

Thus much of Prayer in general. I now proceed to apply all this to publick Prayer, for that was the principal design of St. *Paul* in

Vol. 2. in this place. This whole Epistle is directed to a Bishop, a Governor of the Church, and is almost wholly taken up in prescribing Rules of external Worship and Government.

In this Chapter then, the Apostle giveth direction for publick Prayer; as appears by his opposing the Form of Prayer he there commanded, to that in use among the Jews, in those words. *I will that Men pray every where*, or more literally, in every place. The publick and solemn Worship of the Jews was affixed to the Temple at *Jerusalem*. The publick Worship of Christians was to be celebrated equally in all places, that is, in all parts of the World whereever Christianity prevails, God being equally present in all Congregations of devout Believers.

Had the Apostle here spoken of private Prayer, the opposition of it to the Jewish manner of Prayer had been frivolous and also false. For the Jews did believe and maintain no less than himself, that private Prayer both might and ought to be offered up equally in all places. Besides in the very next Verse the Apostle giveth rules for the Dress of Women, in which they were to appear in the publick Place of Worship, that is, in the Church. All which put it beyond all doubt; that St. *Paul* doth in this place treat of the publick worship of God, and

of

of publick Prayer to be uſed in Churches. Vol. 2.

In the firſt place then, if all Prayer be an Act of Worſhip, publick Prayer is more eminently ſo. The intention of private Prayer is in the firſt place to obtain Supplies to the wants of the Petitioner, and then to worſhip God. Whereas in publick Prayer, on the contrary, the worſhip of God is the chief deſign, and the ſupply of Neceſſities but a Secondary intention. So that to intermit the uſe of publick Prayer, and pray only in private, is for Man to worſhip God only in Subordination to his own deſigns.

It cannot be denied, that publick Worſhip and Prayer do far more effectually tend to the Honour and Glory of God; when Men do openly, and in the hearing of all others, confeſs their Subjection to God, magnifie his Benefits, deprecate his Anger, and acknowledge their own unworthineſs. This is truly and properly to give Glory to God. Whereas he who confineth his Devotion to a Cloſet, may perhaps be allowed to have a juſt eſteem of the Divine Benefits, but ſeems aſhamed to confeſs ſo much to other Men; that he is the Creature of God as well as others, that he equally depends upon him, that he hath alſo violated his Commands and wants his Mercy. The Pſalmiſt therefore upon the receiving of great and eminent Benefits is wont to affirm, that he *will praiſe God in*

the

Vol. 2. *the Congregation*, as well knowing, that such a publick acknowledgment of them did far more contribute to the Honour of God, and was also more pleasing to him.

It is not enough to say, that God receiveth no increase of Honour from our Praises: For neither doth he receive any such advantage from private Worship; yet it would be impious to say, that the worship of God is not the Duty of Man. But by publick worship Men do more evidently manifest their gratitude to God, and the Sense which they have of his Benefits, and their own Obligation, than by private Prayer and Adoration. And upon this account the former is more acceptable to God, who delights in the good of his Creatures, which good can be no otherwise procured or maintained, but by an exact discharge of their Duty, one part of which is a just return of Gratitude and Worship to himself.

God receiveth not increase of Honour from the Praises of Angels, any more than from those of Men. Yet all the Descriptions, which we find of Heaven, represent them, as incessantly singing Praises to their great Creator: Who not content to retain a reverent Conception of the Divine Majesty in their own thoughts, communicate them to each other, and publish them to the whole World.

And

And indeed to what purpoſe can we imagine, that God ſhould both under the Old and the New Teſtament, found Churches, that is, ſeparate Societies of Men, united by certain Laws, and under one common Form of worſhip; if it be not the Duty of all the Members of thoſe Churches to meet together at certain times and places, and adore him by one common Form? If God had intended to reſt ſatisfied with private Worſhip, in vain did he contrive and found Churches by wonders of Providence, as he hath that both of the Jews and Chriſtians; in vain hath he given to them particular Laws, and annexed many Priviledges and Promiſes to the whole Society, and to the Members of it as ſuch.

Under the Old Law he required *every Male to appear before him* in the publick Place of worſhip *three times in the year*, and commanded publick Worſhip to be continually paid to himſelf in daily Sacrifices. Yet as he declared, altho' he cared not for ten thouſand Bullocks, nor for Rivers of Oyl, he would not remit the Duty; and adjoyned Rewards to it, becauſe it publickly declared the Subjection of the devout Sacrificers to himſelf.

In theſe publick Forms of worſhip in the Jewiſh Temple, our Lord while on Earth, conſtantly gave his Attendance at appointed times. After his Aſcenſion and the

Vol. 2. Gift of the Holy Ghoſt, the Apoſtles (as we find in the III. of the *Acts*) frequented the Temple at the uſual hours of Prayer, and joyned in the common Forms of Prayer there made uſe of, altho' by the Operation of the Holy Ghoſt, then received by them, they could have poured out *Extempore* far more excellent and devout Prayers than thoſe received in the Temple, which were of humane Compoſition.

If then God ſo ſtrictly exacted the Practice of publick Worſhip in all times; if Chriſt and his Apoſtles ſo exactly performed it; if for this very Purpoſe God hath gathered and united a Church, under common Laws, and the hopes of a common Reward; what account can they make, who either lay aſide all publick Worſhip as ſuperfluous, or decry the daily Sacrifice of prayer and praiſe to God offered up in the Church; or when themſelves meet once a week to worſhip God, place the Religion of the day in hearing a Sermon, which is properly no part of Worſhip, but only an Exhortation to, & direction how to worſhip God?

In the next place, as the Obligation of publick Prayer is greater than that of private; ſo the Promiſes made to the one are far greater than to the other. Our Lord hath promiſed, *That whereſoever two or three ſhall be gathered together in his name*, whereſoever there ſhall be an Aſſembly of Chriſtians

ſtians joyned together to offer up Prayer and to worſhip God, *he will be in the midſt of them:* He will watch over them with his Providence, he will own them as Members of his Body, he will excite and render effectual their Devotion by the Operation of his Holy Spirit, he will intercede with God for the Grant of their Petitions. And how effectual muſt thoſe Prayers be, wherein our Lord himſelf concurs? Or what doubt can remain of the acceptance of our Worſhip, and the grant of our Deſires, when he is preſent with us? Vol. 2.

All the glorious Promiſes of Aſſiſtance, Pardon, Favour and Protection, which were anciently made to the Jews worſhipping God at the Temple in *Jeruſalem*, are now tranſlated to the Chriſtian Churches. The only difference is, that whereas among them the publick worſhip of God was confined to one place; in the Chriſtian Religion, which was given not to one Family or Nation but to the whole World, the ſame Priviledge is made common to all places of publick Worſhip in all parts of the World, wherever Chriſtianity doth prevail. To Worſhip offered up from publick places alone, the Promiſes of the greater and more illuſtrious Bleſſings of God are annexed. And no wonder; ſince by this alone the publick Religion of any Nation doth appear, by this alone the publick Honour of God is maintained in the World. Dd 2 While

Vol. 2. While the Tabernacle made by *Moſes*, and afterwards the Temple at *Jeruſalem* ſtood, while daily Sacrifices and Worſhip were performed therein; it was an undeniable Evidence, that the Jews worſhipped the true God, that he was their God, and they his people. When the people generally forſook the publick Worſhip thought it ſufficient to perform the Duties of Religion at home, to worſhip God *upon every high Hill, and under every green tree*; there then remained no farther Evidence of the publick Belief or Religion of the Nation. While therefore Worſhip was duly paid by them in the place appointed by God, all the Promiſes, Bleſſings and Rewards mentioned in the Jewiſh Covenant took place; they enjoyed Peace, ſecurity and abundance; their Sins were expiated; their Petitions granted; no publick Calamity did attend them.

When this publick Worſhip was intermitted by them, God was no longer ingaged by Promiſe to protect them: *S*ince they did not now any longer appear to be his People, the only Evidence of which was publick Worſhip. All this doth fully appear from the whole Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, where we find the publick Proſperity or Miſery of the Jews to depend upon the regular Obſervation or general Intermiſſion of publick Worſhip.

In

In like manner, and for the ſame Reaſons in the Chriſtian Church, the more eminent Promiſes and Benefits of God are affixed to publick Worſhip; ſince by this alone the Honour of God is preſerved and maintained among us. If Men ſhould content themſelves to worſhip God in Private, and proceed no farther, it could never appear what Religion any Nation profeſſeth, what God they worſhip. No publick Honour could be ſaid to be paid by that Nation to him; and conſequently no National Bleſſings could be expected. But when in any Countrey, places are ſolemnly Dedicated to the true God, when in them Divine Worſhip is conſtantly paid, eſpecially if this Worſhip be daily renewed; if the Body of the Nation joyn in the Profeſſion of the ſame Religion, in paying the ſame Worſhip, as they have opportunity; then ſuch a Religion appears to be National; then all thoſe Expreſſions ſo frequent in the Old Teſtament, *For my Names ſake*, *For my Temples ſake*, and *Leaſt my Name ſhould be blaſphemed among the Heathen*, will take place among us. Vol. 2.

For Example, what greater Evidence can there be of the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity in this Nation, than that in this Sacred place Prayer hath been daily offered up to God, through Chriſt, for many Ages together? Such Sacred places are the ſtand-

ing Monuments, and the undeniable Testimonies of the Piety and Devotion of any Nation; by these we know that our Forefathers worshipped the true God; and by these our Posterity will know, that we continued the same Worship. By this the Honour of God is chiefly kept up in any Countrey; and since he hath affirmed, That *those who Honour him, he will Honour*; then only can we rationally presume to receive from God publick and national Blessings, while such a publick Worship is duly maintained amongst us.

Thus I have passed through the first Branch of my Text, the Duty of Prayer. The present time will not permit me to proceed to the Consideration of the rest; but give me leave to apply what hath been already said.

From hence it appears to be the indispensable and constant Duty of Men to worship God; that the best and most significant way of worship is Prayer; that publick Prayer best answers the end of Worship, and is also most acceptable to God. Such is the Duty of Man, and such are the Reasons of it.

Let us now look upon the general Practice of Christians, and more particularly those of our own Communion, who are better instructed, and have greater Advantages in the exact Discharge of their Duty than

than any other Society of Men. I would not be so uncharitable as to affirm, yet I much fear it, that great numbers of Christians never worship God in private; altho' no Necessities of Life can be so urgent, as not to permit every one to address himself daily to God in that short Form of Prayer, which our Lord taught us, (of those who have more leisure, and Knowledge much more is required.) But to pass to the publick Worship of God, how few are there of those which frequent it, who perform it as they ought to do? Education, Custom, and the Laws of the Countrey, oblige Men to cease from Labour upon those days which are dedicated to the worship of God; I wish I could add that the same Considerations obliged them to frequent duly the publick Place of worship upon those days; but from them who do frequent it, as many as have not given themselves up to Irreligion, we expect a true, constant, and humble Devotion. Vol. 2.

But instead of that, we cannot but observe and deplore the great Negligence and stupid Carelessness of many who are present at the publick Prayers. Many suppose themselves to have discharged the Duty of this day, if they have heard a Sermon. Hence they are not at all concerned, if they enter after the Prayers are begun, after the Confession is made, and

Vol. 2. the Abſolution pronounced by the Prieſt in the name of God. When they are preſent at them, they ſeem Irkſome to them; They joyn not in them; far from any Devotion in the Soul, they will not be perſwaded to pay any Bodily Reverence; they refuſe to kneel, and ſome even preſume to ſit ſtill at the time of Prayer. We want that cheerful Concurrence in the Congregation, in which the ancient Chriſtians ſo much glorified, ſaying, that an *Amen* pronounced by the whole multitude, was like *a clap of Thunder*, which pierced Heaven. In our Aſſemblies how ſmall a part joyn in repeating the common Forms of Confeſſion, Praiſe and Adoration of God; and not many vouchſafe to add an *Amen* to the end of the ſeveral Prayers. Such is the State of publick Devotion at this time, lamentable indeed to be conſidered, but ſuch as cannot be denied. To ſuch therefore let me addreſs my ſelf.

Do not you believe your ſelves equally obliged to worſhip God with others? Were not you alſo created by him, & ſtill depend upon him? Why then do you refuſe to do Homage to him, to profeſs publickly your Subjection by ſuch an humble Poſture of Body as may declare it? If an Heathen ſhould enter into our Churches, in the time of Prayer, and examine our Devotions (give me leave to put the Caſe, for

St.

St. *Paul* before put it to the *Corinthi-* Vol. 2.
ans) what would he ſay, when he ſhould behold ſome kneeling, the greater part ſtanding, and many perhaps ſitting? He could ſay no other, than that little Decency is obſerved in the Religious Aſſemblies of Chriſtians; that in them many Perſons are preſent, but few of thoſe worſhip God; that the greater part expreſs a ſtrange unconcernedneſs in a Lazy poſture of ſtanding; and that ſome ſeem deſignedly to affront the Majeſty of God by ſitting in his immediate Preſence, and when he is invoked.

Let not theſe Reproaches any longer be ſaid of Chriſtians, who want no means of Inſtruction, and whoſe Religion teacheth them the contrary. Aſſure your ſelves, that it is not liſtning to a Sermon, which can ſuffice; this is not to worſhip God, but only to learn how to worſhip him, and to be excited to it.

The chief Deſign of your meeting in this holy Place is, that you may worſhip God herein. But how can you be ſaid to worſhip him, who place your ſelves in no Poſture of Worſhip, who expreſs no Concern at the words of publick Prayer, joyn not in them, nor add an *Amen* to them? Can you really believe ſtanding or ſitting to be a poſture of Worſhip? Or will you not confeſs kneeling to be really the moſt

Vol. 2. moſt humble Poſture? And if ſo, ſurely the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Lord of Life and Death, is to be approached in the moſt humble and moſt devout manner. Be not aſhamed to correct an ill Cuſtom; ſtudy to offer up to God a compleat Service, to be preſent at the beginning of Prayers, to attend diligently to them, to joyn devoutly in them, to worſhip God both with Body and Soul, ſince both were created by him. So ſhall you truly worſhip God; ſo ſhall you Entitle your ſelves to all thoſe glorious Promiſes, which are annexed to true Piety and Devotion, obtain your Deſires, and ſave your Souls.

The Sixteenth SERMON.

PREACH'D

1690.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

1 Tim. II. 8.

I will therefore, that Men pray every where, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe upon theſe words, I treated largely of the Duty of Prayer, enjoyned in the former part of the Verſe, *I will that Men pray*; and urged the Obligation of this Duty from theſe two Conſiderations eſpecially, that Prayer is a principal Act of Adoration, and the moſt Eſſential part of the poſitive Worſhip of God; which being a Duty incumbent upon all Men, and at all times, maketh the Duty and the frequency of Prayer to be no leſs neceſſary.

In the Second place I laid open the Advantages

Vol. 2. vantages to be received from Prayer, and the Promiſes annexed to it; that ſo if the Senſe of Duty could not engage, yet at leaſt that of Intereſt might perſwade.

I then proceed to apply all this to publick Prayer, having firſt proved to you that the Apoſtle in this Place treateth of that eſpecially; and therein manifeſted how much greater the Obligation is to publick Prayer, how more expreſſive of our Subjection to God, what greater Advantages it bringeth to devout Supplicants, and what more noble Promiſes are annexed to it. It remaineth now to paſs through the other parts of the Text, which are theſe three.

I. The place of Prayer, *Every where.*

II. The poſture of Prayer, *Lifting up holy hands.*

III. The Conditions of Prayer required to make it acceptable and effectual. *Lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*

I. The place of Prayer, the Apoſtle teacheth to be *every where*; that is, not in all places alike, but in all parts of the World, wherever any Members of the Chriſtian Church are to be found. Herein he diſtinguiſheth the publick Worſhip of Chriſtians from that of the Jews; among whom the more ſolemn parts of Divine Worſhip, nay all the parts of the poſitive Worſhip of God, inſtituted by himſelf, were affixed

to

to one certain place, where the Priests daily offered Sacrifices, and performed the other Offices of Legal Worship; and adult Males among the Jews thrice every year gave their Attendance. Vol. 2.

This was both easie to the Jews, by reason of the small Dimensions of their Country; and also necessary to preserve them from relapsing into Idolatry and Superstition, which would not have been avoided in that stiff-necked People, had the publick Worship of God been permitted to them in many separate places, where the High Priest had not the immediate over-sight of them; as they did actually fall into Idolatry and corrupted their Religion, whensoever quitting the Temple at *Jerusalem*, they began to worship God *upon every high Hill, and under every green Tree.* To this Temple therefore, after the full Settlement of the Jews in the promised Land, the publick Worship of God was wholly affixed; out of which it was not lawful to offer Sacrafice, nor was any Expiation of sin provided. To it many glorious Promises were appropriated, as that God would hear the Prayers offered up in it, and be gracious to his People for the sake of it.

But in the Christian Religion, which was not to be contained in one Family or Nation, but to be propagated to all the Members of Mankind; the Observation of this Institution

Vol. 2. tion became both impoſſible & unneceſſary, and was therefore aboliſhed by God. The publick Worſhip of him was thenceforward commanded to be alike celebrated in all places, that is, in all parts of the Church. His Preſence was not confined, nor his Promiſes annexed to one place; he is equally preſent in all Congregations of devout Believers, and receiveth their Petitions with equal Favour. Upon this account the Apoſtle diſtinguiſhing the Chriſtian from the Jewiſh Worſhip, directeth publick Prayers to be offered up *every where*; as he had before diſtinguiſhed it upon another reſpect in the firſt Verſe of this Chapter, there commanding *that Supplications, Prayers and Interceſſions be made for all Men*; whereas the Jews never prayed for any but thoſe of their own Nation and Communion.

This Enlargement of the place of Worſhip could not indeed but be extremely ſurprizing to the Jews, who had been brought up in a profound Veneration of the Sanctity of the Temple of *Jeruſalem*, to which the publick Worſhip of the true God had been now appropriated for near twelve hundred Years. And therefore the Divine Wiſdom, which from all Ages determined to enlarge his limits of the Church, and gather into it as many of the Jews as by a right uſe of their Reaſon ſhould be brought

to

to believe in Christ, had, both by prece- Vol. 2.
dent and subsequent Facts, provided abun-
dant Reasons to convince the Jews, that the publick Worship of himself should not always be confined to the Temple of *Jerusalem*, but after the coming of the Messias should be extended into the whole Earth. Thus *Zeph.* II. 11. it is foretold, That when God should found the glorious Kingdom of the Messias, then *Men should worship him every one from his place, even all the Isles of the Heathen.* And in Mal. I. 11. *For from the rising of the Sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the Heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.* Which Prophesies did clearly instruct the Jews, that when the Gentiles should be gathered into the Church, that is, at the coming of the Messias, he should be worshipped alike in all places of the Earth; and even those Acts of publick Worship which were more peculiar to the Temple of *Jerusalem*, that is, Incense and Sacrifice, should be then offered up *from the rising of the Sun to the going down of the same*, although in a more spiritual manner. This Doctrine and Institution therefore ought not to have appeared strange unto the Jews, whose Minds God had prepared for the Reception of the Messias by these and many other Prophesies. Af-

Vol. 2. After the actual Institution of the Christian Religion he gave a more visible and demonstrative Argument of his Pleasure herein; an Argument which not only might have convinced the Jews of those days, but unanswerably confutes their Infidelity to this day, and grows more strong with time; that is, the Destruction of the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and thereupon the perpetual Cessation of the Legal Worship of the Jews, contrived and effected by his Providence not many years after the Ascension of Christ, and as soon as the sound of the Gospel was gone out into all parts of the then known Gentile World. Which put it past all doubt, that God intended to put an end to the Jewish Dispensation, which could no longer take place, than while that Temple did exist, and continued in the Possession of the Jews; in which the more essential parts of it were necessarily to be performed.

Had God intended still to have obliged the Jews to the practice of their Ceremonious Worship in the Temple of *Jerusalem*, he must also be supposed to have obliged himself to continue the Existence and Possession of that Temple to them. The Temple indeed was once before destroyed, and the Worship of it discontinued under the Captivity of *Babylon*. But that was only for one Generation, till that universal Idolatry

latry which had then corrupted the whole Nation of the Jews, ſhould be worn out; and to preſerve their Faith during that Interruption, God foretold by his Prophets that they ſhould return again, *and ſerve him in that very place*, fixed the number of years in which this Reſtauration ſhould be accompliſhed, *in ſeventy years*, and at that time accordingly did perform it. Whereas this latter Deſtruction of the Temple being without any Promiſe of Reſtitution; and the Jews now kept from the Poſſeſſion of it for more than ſixteen hundred Years, no Prophet in the mean while appearing to Comfort, and keep up the external Preſence of God among them, as was eminently done during all the Captivity of *Babylon*; it cannot but be concluded, that they are no longer the peculiar People of God; that the Divine Wiſdom will not any longer confine the publick Worſhip of himſelf to one certain place; that by his Providence contriving the Deſtruction of that Temple, he hath offered ſufficient Reaſons to the Jews, that he would not any longer appropriate his Worſhip to their Temple, and to us, that he heareth us alike in all parts of the World, ſince he hath appointed no other fixed place of Worſhip in the room of it. Vol. 2.

And thus much in Proof of what the Apoſtle advanceth in theſe words, the uni-

Vol. 2. verſality of the Divine Worſhip, as to the place of it. A Doctrine neceſſary to be inculcated and ſet in a clear Light at that time, when the unbelieving Jews made it a matter of great Offence; and even the believing Jews were ſo hardly drawn from that perſwaſion which they once received, and which indeed once was true, that Worſhip and Prayer were no where ſo acceptable to God as in the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, that many of them continued to pay their publick Worſhip in that place, even until the final Deſtruction of it. Nor is this Doctrine of the Apoſtle without great uſe to Chriſtians of all Ages; encouraging them to offer up Prayers with aſſurance of being heard, giving them more noble and enlarged thoughts of the Worſhip and the benefits of God, and a righter Notion of the Nature of Prayer.

The Encouragement ariſeth from thoſe many Promiſes made by God to the Temple of *Jeruſalem*, that he would be there peculiarly Preſent, that he would hear the Petitions of devout Supplicants preſented in it, that he would be gracious to the whole Nation for the ſake of it. Of all theſe Promiſes he gave aſſurance not only by the many Examples of Succeſs attending the Prayers of Men offered up therein, which we read in the Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament; but alſo by thoſe viſible Symbols

bols of his Preſence which he placed in it, Vol. 2.
ſuch as were the *Urim* and *Thummim*, the
glorious appearances of the Mercy-Seat,
the Fire conſuming the Sacrifices, and o-
thers, which induced all who came to pay
their Worſhip at the Temple to addreſs
themſelves *boldly to the throne of Grace*, and
with aſſurance of Succeſs; being convin-
ced by thoſe viſible Symbols, and by the
often repeated Promiſes and Proteſtations
of God, that he was indeed there eminent-
ly preſent, and ready to beſtow thoſe Fa-
vours in it, which in vain had been beg-
ged in any other place.

Under the Goſpel, God hath appoint-
ed publick places of Worſhip in all parts
of the Believing World; and to every one
of theſe hath transferred thoſe ſame Pro-
miſes of Favour and peculiar Preſence,
which were once appropriated to the
Temple. The certainty of Succeſs, the
advantages of Prayer are the ſame in both:
Only in the Chriſtian Church the benefit
is more univerſal. Which ſerveth alſo to
raiſe the thoughts of Man in Relation to
the Worſhip and the benefits of God.
Worſhip was equally due to God from all
the Members of Mankind; but it was not
morally poſſible that all ſhould worſhip
him in that ſingle place. Yet at that time
was there no other place in the World,
where any revealed Promiſes of graciouſly

Vol. 2. hearing the Prayers, and rewarding the Devotions of Men were given.

So that it eaſily appeared that the Jewiſh Religion was calculated for a very ſmall part of Mankind, and that the Divine Beneficence was not yet diſplayed in its full Luſtre; in that God confined his Preſence, and appropriated his Promiſes to that place alone. Whereas in founding a better and more laſting Covenant under the Goſpel, he hath communicated the Promiſe and bleſſed Effects of his peculiar Preſence to all true Worſhippers of him, in all places and at all times.

It is now undeniably manifeſt, that his Favour is founded in eternal Reaſons of Piety, Juſtice and Goodneſs, not in Denominations of Sects, or Parties, or Nations, or Kindreds. All which raiſe a more noble Conception of the Nature of Religion, and of the Wiſdom, Juſtice and Beneficence of God, the Author of it.

Laſtly, it giveth to Men right Informations of the Nature of Prayer; who while the peculiar Preſence of God was annexed to one certain place, were prone to believe, that not ſo much the Devotion or internal Qualifications of the Supplicant, recommended the Prayer to God, as the place from which it was offered up. That God reſpected not ſo much the Fervour, Submiſſion and Attention of the Mind, as the Circum-

Circumſtances of place and time; or at leaſt that the latter was chiefly regarded by him. But ſince the Promiſe of a kind Reception of Prayer directed to him, is, by God under the Goſpel, alike granted to all places, it is evident, that no external Circumſtance is ſo much reſpected, as the internal Conditions of it, Faith and Submiſſion, Obedience and Intention: That theſe he requireth in the firſt place, and the other only in Subordination to them. Vol. 2.

For however the external Circumſtances of place and time are required, but in Conjunction with the more eſſential Conditions of Prayer; yet they are ſtill required. The neceſſity of publick Worſhip, whereof Prayer is the principal part, was in the former Diſcourſe largely treated of. This Worſhip cannot be reduced into Practice, unleſs it be determined to certain places and times. To ſpeak of the times of Worſhip is not my preſent Purpoſe: And if the places of it be not fixed, no publick Worſhip can well conſiſt. The Apoſtle therefore in commanding Prayers to be offered up *every where*, hath not therein taught that all places are equally fitted in which Prayers may be made. He hath taken away the Singularity of one place, and the Appropriation of all publick Worſhip to that alone; but continued the neceſſity of fixing ſome certain places, in all parts of the Believing World, for

Vol. 2. that Purpoſe; not left it indifferent, whether Men pray to God in a place dedicated to religious Uſes, or in a place made common to all the ordinary Uſes of Life. The Chriſtian Religion hath taken away whatſoever was merely Ceremonial in the Jewiſh Religion, but retained all which was derived from the Law of Nature or the light of Reaſon. And that the Conſecration of certain places to the worſhip of God, and appropriating them to that uſe alone is ſuch, will be uſeful to manifeſt; ſince there are not wanting ſome, who decry all difference between ſacred and prophane places.

Firſt then, it was not in the Inſtitution of the Jewiſh Religion that God began to be a God of order and Decency; thoſe Attributes were eternal in him, and evidently appear in that moſt beautiful and harmonious Order of the World, and all the parts of it, which himſelf hath fixed in the Creation of it: Which is contrived with the moſt exact Symmetry, diſpoſed in a moſt beautiful Order, and continued in it. The Worſhip which Man pays to God, being founded upon his Attributes; and the knowledge of thoſe Attributes chiefly appearing by the Effects of them, it is Conſonant to reaſon that Man ſhould direct his Worſhip with reſpect to them. If then, in the viſible Operations of God, ſuch a decent Order be every where Conſpicuous, in the publick

publick Worſhip of him the ſame Order ought alſo to be maintained; otherwiſe no Acknowledgment is made, no Homage paid to that divine Perfection, which was the Principle of that Order and Decency, which we ſee and admire in the Creation. God hath not only formed what was abſolutely neceſſary for the Life of Man, but alſo added infinite variety of Light, Minerals, Plants, and Animals for his Delight, and for the Ornament of Life. Vol. 2.

Since therefore the Rules of Divine Worſhip are to be taken from the Divine Perfections manifeſted by their Operations, this conduct of God in creating and governing the World, doth not only warrant the Addition of Ceremonies and many Circumſtances to the more eſſential Parts of Worſhip, but alſo makes it to become a Duty. And to accuſe ſuch Additions and external Ceremonies of Superſtition, is no leſs unreaſonable, than to queſtion the Wiſdom of God, who hath added to the Creation many things not neceſſary, yet ornamental to it. How incongruous would it be to worſhip the God of Order and Decency in an irregular and ſlovenly manner? How improper a return for the additional, yet unneceſſary Conveniences of humane Life, to adore the Author of them

Vol. 2. without any Order or external Decency?

The Senſe of this induced Men before the Inſtitution of the *Jewiſh* Religion, to dedicate certain Places to the Worſhip of God, and ſet them apart for that uſe only. The Monuments of thoſe times are few, being all comprized in the Book of *Geneſis*; yet therein we find evident Footſteps of ſuch Dedications; more particularly in *Gen.* xxviii. 16. where *Jacob* enjoying a Viſion at *Bethel*, becauſe it was a Mark of the Divine Preſence, immediately concluded that the Place was dedicated to his Service. *And he ſaid, ſurely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. How dreadful is this Place! This is none other but the Houſe of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven.* Which Reflection of *Jacob* proveth it to have been the Cuſtom of the Patriarchs to Dedicate certain Places to be the Houſes of God, and to have been their Belief, that in thoſe places God was more peculiarly preſent. And to manifeſt that his Notion of the Houſe of God was no other than of a Place of Worſhip, he immediately addreſſed himſelf to worſhip God in it; as it follows in the 18th. Verſe.

I might add, that the Dedicating certain Places to this uſe, was not the Practice of the Patriarchs alone, but of all Ages

Ages and Men profeſſing any Religion, whether true or falſe; which general Practice and Perſwaſion is in all other Caſes allowed to be a certain indication of the Voice of Nature. Vol. 2.

But I proceed to obſerve the Reaſon of it; where it may be conſidered, that as God is the Author of Soul and Body, of Heaven and Earth, of Life, and all the Conveniencies of it; ſo he requireth, as a juſt and neceſſary Act of Adoration, that ſome part of every one of theſe ſhould be dedicated to himſelf, as an Acknowledgment of his Dominion over the whole. Thus the Operations of the Soul pay Homage to him in the more eſſential parts of Worſhip; the Body in the Concomitant Parts of it, that is, in the external Geſtures of Adoration; we acknowledge to have received our Goods and Wealth from him, by offering up ſome part of it to himſelf, to be employed as he ſhall direct; which in the Jewiſh Religion conſiſted chiefly in Sacrifices and Oblations; in the Chriſtian Religion, in Acts of Charity. We confeſs him the Author of Life, by dedicating certain times of it to his Service; and we confeſs him the Lord of the whole Earth, by appropriating and ſubmitting ſome parts of it to his immediate Service. By this

Vol. 2. this his Right and Title to the whole Earth is eminently acknowledged, and the Vaſſallage of Man the Inhabitant of it is declared.

Further, the Erection and Dedication of Churches to the Worſhip and the Honour of God, is an illuſtrious Teſtimony of the publick Religion of any Nation or Country, and upon that Account is both uſeful and neceſſary. It is our Duty to proclaim our Subjection to God, and Belief in him, by all ſignificative Expreſſions; to teſtifie it to the whole World, and, if it be poſſible, perpetuate the Memory of this our Profeſſion to all Ages, and communicate the Knowledge of it to all Men. This, Fabricks dedicated to the Service of God do moſt naturally ſignifie, which are ſo many ſtanding and laſting Monuments of our Belief in that God, to whoſe Service they were appropriated.

For this Reaſon, we often find in the Book of *Geneſis*, that the Patriarchs erected Pillars, and Heaps of Stones, to be ſo many laſting Monuments of their Belief in God and Subjection to him. And how graciouſly God accepted ſuch viſible Profeſſions of Faith and Obedience to himſelf, appears from that frequent Expreſſion employed by him in the Old Teſtament,

ment, *For my Temples ſake at Jeruſalem.* What Reaſon can be aſſigned why God ſhould be moved to do any thing for his Temples ſake, which being purely material, was not capable of any Merit; but that it being erected to his Honour, and dedicated to his Service, by the Nation of the Jews, was an illuſtrious Sign to the whole World, that that Nation believed and truſted in him? While that Fabrick ſtood conſecrated to his Name, and Prayers were offered up in it to him; it could not be diſſembled that he was the God of that Nation, and they his People. Vol. 2.

And indeed it is too ſad, and yet undeniable, that whereever the ſolemn and publick Worſhip of God in certain and fixed Places dedicated to that uſe is diſcontinued, Religion, the Honour and Reverence of God immediately decays, and becomes forgotten. As in all Parts of the Chriſtian Church it may be obſerved, that whereever the publick Worſhip of God in Churches hath been taken from Chriſtians, as in *Perſia* and *Africa*, the Faith of Chriſt hath been wholly loſt in one or two Generations; whereas the Church of *Greece* by the Advantage of the uſe of Churches permitted to them, hath continued to flouriſh and retain her Faith

Vol. 2. Faith unſhaken under the Government of the *Turks*; although continually oppreſſed, diſcountenanced, injured, and perſecuted by them.

It was therefore the Effect of the moſt benign Providence of God in the Primitive Church, that he ſuffer'd not any of their Perſecutions to be of long Continuance; but reſtoring Peace to the Church, gave them Liberty therewith to exerciſe the true Worſhip of himſelf in publick, ſolemn, and ſacred Places. Could the Religion of Chriſt have been maintained by private and clancular Meetings, the Zeal and Piety of thoſe Times would have effected it. Yet then it was thought impoſſible to perform it. Nor would God have interpoſed by ſo many Miracles of Providence, to reſtore his Church to the Freedom of worſhipping him in publick Churches, had not ſuch Worſhip been more acceptable to him, than that directed from Corners of private Houſes. And therefore no ſooner was the Storm of any Perſecution blown over, but the Chriſtians immediately ſet themſelves to erect Magnificent Churches to the Honour of the true God, and in them to celebrate all Acts of Worſhip. Not that God heard not their Prayers directed to him from ſecret and private places; their

their Piety, Patience, and Conſtancy deſerved no leſs: But himſelf received far leſs Honour from private than publick Worſhip, and therefore for his own Names-ſake, as he frequently told the *Jews*, he reſtored them to the enjoyment of peace and quiet. Vol. 2.

Thus the *Jews* alſo contented themſelves to worſhip in a movable Tabernacle, while they travelled in the Wilderneſs, or were not fully ſettled in the Land of *Canaan*. But no ſooner were all the *Jebuſites* driven out of the Land, but *David* prepared to build a ſtately Temple in Honour of the God of *Iſrael*.

Thus the Erection and Dedication of Churches, is not only an open Profeſſion of the Worſhip of that God to whoſe ſervice they are conſecrated, but alſo an eminent Monument of Gratitude to God for giving peace and quiet unto the Church, procuring to her Members the Liberty of offering up Prayers to him, and profeſſing to believe on him in publick. The Magnificence of theſe Fabricks, is a further Argument of Thankfulneſs for the wealth and plenty of that People, by whom they were founded in Honour of God, and remain an eternal Mark of Acknowledgment, that both peace and plenty proceeded from his Gift;

to

Vol. 2. to whoſe Name they are ſacred. They are the moſt obvious and ſenſible Demonſtration of the long and uninterrupted Continuance of the Faith of Chriſt in any Nation, and the Devotion and Zeal of his Followers; and thereby exceedingly promoted the Honour of God in the World, which is the chief end of all publick Exerciſe of Religion. To confine the Worſhip of God to private Houſes, or movable Congregations, is what the ancient Chriſtians thought the greateſt Misfortune attending their Perſecution. And they who in times of Peace pay no more ſolemn Worſhip to God, than what is really neceſſary to pay in time of perſecution, if they ſhould indeed be perſecuted, it is more than probable will pay no manner of Worſhip. At leaſt to decry the Erection and Conſecration of ſacred places, ſeems to be no other than to oppoſe the Increaſe of Divine Honour, and to include a fear leaſt poſterity ſhould know from thoſe durable Fabricks, that their Fore-fathers worſhipped the true God.

Laſtly, if the publick Worſhip of God is to be celebrated in places ſolemnly ſet apart for that uſe, and the peculiar preſence of God is promiſed in ſuch Places; if his Honour be promoted by erection of ſuch

such sacred Buildings, and kept up by the Continuance of them; it follows that no small Reverence is to be paid to them. To treat them as unholy or common places in any matter, is to withdraw them from that use to which they were designed, to rob God of his peculiar possession, and to deny his presence in them. On the contrary, all external Acts of Reverence manifest our Acknowledgment of the Relation which they bear to him; of our Belief in him, to whose Honour they are dedicated; of our Gratitude to him, by whom we enjoy the open Profession of our Religion; of our Zeal for his Glory, which is chiefly advanced, and maintained by them; of our perswasion of his constant and immediate presence in them; that Veneration therefore which the devout Members of this Church pay to sacred Places, is neither the Effect of Superstition, nor the Remains of Popery; but ariseth from a pious and rational perswasion of the Honour due to God, and all things relating to him. A Practice as ancient as Christianity it self; and which St. *Paul* makes use of as received and confessed among all Christians, when reproving the Indecencies committed by the *Corinthians* in their Churches, 1 *Cor.* XI. 22. he aggravates the Guilt of them by

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Vol. 2. by this Conſideration, *What have ye not Houſes to eat and to drink in? Or deſpiſe you the Church of God.* Where oppoſing the Church of God to private Houſes, it is plain that he ſpeaks of material Churches; and no leſs plain that he taketh it for granted, and allowed by them, that ſo great Reverence is due to theſe Churches, that even for the ſole Conſideration of their Holineſs, no indecent Action ought to be committed in them.

Before him, our bleſſed Lord had by his own Practice given us an eminent Example of the ſame Regard due to ſacred places; when he ſcourged the Money-Changers out of the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, although they had placed themſelves only in the outward Porches, and Avenues of the Temple, where no Act of religious and publick Worſhip was wont to be performed. And the Reaſon he aſſigned was this, *It is written, my Houſe ſhall be called the Houſe of Prayer*; which maketh this whole Obſervation concerning the Veneration due to Churches not improper in a Diſcourſe concerning the place of Prayer.

III. I paſs now to the third Branch of the Text, that is, the Poſture that is to be uſed in Prayer, which is expreſſed in thoſe Words, *Lifting up holy Hands.* Nor is

is the Poſture of Prayer a Matter ſo in- Vol. 2.
different, as deſerveth not our Enquiry.
It is indeed the Error of ſome, that all external Modes of Worſhip are indifferent; but to them who are no profeſſed Enemies to Order and Decency, it appears far otherwiſe. For ſince God is the Creator both of Body and Soul, ſince the Exiſtence of both is derived from him, and continued by him; ſince he hath provided for the Body as well as Soul both in this Life and in the next, it follows that both ought to make Returns of Praiſe and Worſhip to God. This the Soul, the ſole Fountain of Reaſon, doth, by loving, honouring, obeying, and ſubmitting to him. The Body indeed is not capable of ſuch noble Operations, yet is it enabled to give Praiſe and Glory to God by Geſtures implying Adoration, Submiſſion, and Subjection to him. To worſhip God only with the Body, were to make no returns of Gratitude for the Faculties of the Soul received from him; and to worſhip him only with the Mind, were to deny the Subjection of the Body to him; Both therefore are alike neceſſary. The Worſhip of the Soul is indeed more acceptable, becauſe the Faculties of it are far more noble: but the Worſhip of the Body is

Vol. 2. no leſs the Duty of Man; and that eſpecially in publick Worſhip, where the chief Deſign being the Glory of God; the Worſhip of the Body is the only viſible Teſtimony of the internal Honour payd by the Soul to God: and that not only becauſe the Words of publick praiſe and adoration are expreſſed by the Organs of the Body, but alſo in that the very Geſture of the Body is a Mark of Subjection paid to God; ſince ſuch Geſtures uſed in ſacred Places, and to an inviſible Being, are notoriouſly known to be intended in Honour of God.

Bodily Worſhip therefore is abſolutely neceſſary, and that ſuch as may expreſs the greateſt Submiſſion, and deepeſt Humility. The moſt intenſe Operations of the Soul are due to God, and ſo are the moſt ſignificative Humiliations of the Body. That poſture therefore, which expreſſeth the moſt humble Submiſſion, ought to be employed in Prayer, the principal Act of Worſhip; and is indeed, an eſſential Part of Worſhip. Only the particular poſture is not determined in Scripture, becauſe the Expreſſions of Civility, Honour, and Subjection, vary in ſeveral Ages and Countries. So that it was impoſſible to determine any one Geſture, ſince what was very expreſſive of

of Worſhip in one Nation, might be contrary in another. Vol. 2.

The external Mode of Worſhip therefore was left indifferent to the whole Church; becauſe ſuch Modes varied in the ſeveral parts of it; but in any particular Church it is not indifferent, but that it be eſteemed abſolutely neceſſary, eſſential, and commanded by God; which according to the received Cuſtoms of that Nation is moſt expreſſive of Humility, Submiſſion and Subjection. If Kneeling be the moſt humble poſture of Reſpect which obtains in any Nation, that ought to be employed in the Worſhip of God; and in that Caſe to pretend to pray to God ſtanding, is not only indecent, but unlawful; a detaining from God the Honour due to him, and offering to him an inferiour degree of Worſhip, when a more exalted degree is poſſible. If by the Cuſtom of the Country, Proſtration be the moſt ſignificative poſture of Humility, that then becomes neceſſary in Divine Worſhip. If neither Proſtration nor Kneeling be in uſe; neither ought it to be employed in Prayer; but the ſame infallible Rule is always to obtain, that whatſoever Poſture by Cuſtom, Inſtitution, or Preſcription, is moſt ſignificative of Honour, and Sub-

Vol. 2. jection, that ought to be made uſe of in adoring God, and in Prayer, which is always accompanied with Adoration.

To apply this Rule to our own practice: It is notorious and undeniable, that in the Nation wherein we live, Kneeling is the moſt humble poſture; that whereof we ſhould make uſe, were we to do Homage to our Prince, or to beg his Pardon. This poſture therefore becomes our indiſpenſable Duty in Prayer, wherein we adore God, and implore his Mercy. In this Nation therefore, or in any other where Kneeling is the moſt ſubmiſſive Geſture, to practiſe Standing in publick Prayer, is in truth to deny that the ſupream Honour is due to God, to refuſe to pay that Homage to him which Men are content to pay to earthly Princes; as if either he were not worthy of it, or themſelves were too great and noble to condeſcend to it.

In many Eaſtern Countries Proſtration hath been in uſe; and there it was neceſſary in the Worſhip of God for the ſame Reaſon. In others Standing, with either ſpreading forth the Hands, or gently inclining the Body, and laying the Hand upon the Breaſt. In all theſe Caſes the Cuſtom of the Country was to give Directions to the poſture of Religious

ous Worſhip. To enquire which of theſe is the beſt and moſt ſignificative poſture, is wholly vain, ſince no poſture ſignifieth any Reſpect in that Country where it is not uſed; and what in one place includeth the higheſt Honour and Reverence, in another may ſignifie none at all. Among the Jews, Kneeling with Hands lifted up, or ſpread abroad, was the moſt reverential Geſture as might be proved from innumerable places of Scripture (*Pſal.* CXLI. 2. *Dan.* VI. 10. *Luk.* XXII. 41. *Acts* IX. 40. XXI. 5, *&c.*) and ſo alſo among the Grecians. St. *Paul* therefore writing to both of them, joyned in one Church in *Corinth*, expreſſed in this place the poſture of Prayer to be *lifting up of Hands*, becauſe that Cuſtom did prevail among them, not that he intended to oblige us to the ſame poſture in Prayer, who for the ſame Reaſon are left to be directed by the Cuſtom of our particular Nation; amongſt whom the moſt ſubmiſs, and at the ſame time moſt civil poſture is Kneeling, with claſped Hands; and that if I be not miſtaken, was always the moſt received Geſture in the Weſtern World; but moſt certainly was in uſe from the very beginning of Chriſtianity in the Weſtern Church, *vid.* Tertul. & Cypr. Vol. 2.

Vol. 2. It hath been indeed received in all Ages, and in all Countries as far as we can find, that in Sacrifices the Prieſt who offers them up, ſhould do it ſtanding. In Compliance with this univerſal Cuſtom, our Church hath moſt certainly directed, that the Prayers preſented to God from the Altar, where the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Chriſt, the great Sacrifice of the Chriſtian Religion, is celebrated, ſhould be offered up by the Prieſt in a ſtanding Poſture; which I would not omit to obſerve to you, leſt that Practice ſhould be any Objection againſt the neceſſity of Kneeling in time of Prayer; ſince it is founded upon the ſame reaſons, for which Kneeling is neceſſary to the Prieſt at other times, and to the People at all times in praying, that is, upon the univerſal Conſent and Cuſtom of Nations and Countries, concerning the moſt proper and ſignificative Poſtures of Humility, Subjection, and Duty in any Action whatſoever.

I have gone through the ſecond and third Heads of my Text; It remains that I conſider the laſt Part of it, *viz.* The Conditions of Prayer: but that, God willing, ſhall be the Subject of another Diſcourſe.

THE

The Seventeenth SERMON.

PREACH'D

1690.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

1 Tim. II. 8.

I will therefore, that Men pray every where, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.

HAving before diſcourſed at large concerning the Duty, the Place, and the Poſture of Prayer, laid down in the former part of the Words; I proceed now to Treat of the Conditions of Prayer, expreſſed in the latter part of them.

How neceſſary and uſeful the ſerious Conſideration of theſe Conditions is, doth partly appear from the precedent Diſcourſes. For if Prayer be a principal Duty of Man, the chief Act of Adoration which he pays to God, requiſite for the Supply of his Wants, and the Conveyance of

all neceſſary Benefits and Graces to him, he ought to be well inſtructed in the nature of thoſe previous Qualifications, without which, his prayer will fall ſhort of all the Ends and Deſigns of it; and not only ſo, but alſo become a Sin, and an Occaſion of a Curſe to him.

If the determination of the place and poſture of prayer, not univerſally deſigned by God, be in all Caſes ſo uſeful, and in ſome neceſſary to us, much more will thoſe conſtant and unalterable Conditions of prayer be ſo, which ought to accompany it in whatſoever place or poſture it be to be performed; and without which, it is at no time accepted by God. The more general and neceſſary of theſe Conditions the Apoſtle hath, in the latter Words of the Text, ſubjoyned to his Exhortation of Prayer, which are theſe Three.

I. That it be offer'd up *with holy Hands.*
II. *Without Wrath*, and
III. *Without Doubting.*

Of the Reaſon and Neceſſity of theſe three Conditions in their Order.

Firſt, it is required that Prayers be offered up *with holy Hands*, that is, with pure and clean Hands, defiled with no Rapine or Uncleanneſs, innocent from all Rebellion towards God, and In-

juſtice

juſtice towards Men. A Condition not Vol. 2
firſt introduced in the Chriſtian Religion, ~~~
but of univerſal and eternal Obligation, allowed both by Jews and Gentiles. Among them, Prayer was directed to the ſame uſe, which it obtaineth among us; that is, in the firſt place to worſhip God, and in the next place to deprecate his Anger, or procure his Favour. Upon either of theſe Occaſions, the Jews and Gentiles were wont to add Sacrifices to their Prayers, whenſoever they intended to pay a more ſolemn Act of Worſhip, or more ſignally to engage the Favour of God in their behalf. Yet at the ſame time, even the Gentiles placed the Efficacy of the whole Act of Worſhip rather in the Prayer, than in the Sacrifice, as appeareth by thoſe many nice, and ſuperſtitious Rules and Cautions uſed by them, in reciting the publick Forms of Prayer at the time of Sacrifice. So fully were they convinced, that Prayer alone, was that whereby Men could truly worſhip God: and at the ſame time no leſs perſwaded, that without purity their Prayers would be ineffectual.

Hence proceeded that ancient and conſtant Inſtitution of preparing themſelves to ſacrifice by Waſhings, Luſtrations, and other Signs of Purity. An Inſtitution re-

Vol. 2. received also among the Jews, by the express Command of God; who as we read *Exod.* XL. 32. commanded that the Priests should wash and cleanse themselves, whensoever they approached to the the Altar. Consonantly to which Institution, *David* saith *Psal.* XXVI. 6. *I will wash mine Hands in Innocency; and so will I compass thine Altar, O Lord.*

It is so well known to all the Professors of Christianity, that the external purity practised under the Law, did typifie the internal purity to be received under the Gospel, that I will not insist to evince it to you. I will only desire you to consider, that this purification of the Body was chiefly required in order to Prayer, which will instruct you in the necessity of internal Purity at the same time; and to reflect with what Care and Constancy both Jews and Gentiles purified themselves before their Sacrifices; that so Christians may be ashamed, if with the same Diligence they cleanse not their Souls in preparing them for Prayer.

The same Argument perswadeth in both Cases; namely the Sense of Obligation arising from the Rules of that Religion which either do profess. Yet although we never find that either Jews

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or Gentiles presumed to sacrifice with unwashen Hands, it is but ordinary to observe that Christians pray with impure Minds. It be may pretended indeed, that external Purity is an easie Imposition, but internal Holiness a difficult Duty. A Difference indeed not inconsiderable, but infinitely outweighed by the greater Certainty of Truth, by the promises of more glorious Rewards, by the constant pleasure of Mind attending internal Purity, all which were wanting to the outward Ceremonies of Purification; and lastly by that Conviction which every one may have of the reasonableness of it, whereas the Reasons of external Holiness were either obscure, as among the Jews; or none at all, as among the Gentiles. Some of these reasons I will now insist on.

And first, that the Prayers of Men be accepted by God, it must be supposed that they are at Peace with him, which cannot be without innocence and purity. Every Sin is an Act of Rebellion against God, by which Man withdraws himself from his Obedience, pretends to be independent from him, and proclaims Enmity to his Laws and Government. It is easie then to conceive, that while the Soul of Man is detained in any Vice contrary

trary to the Commands of God, his Prayers will be ineffectual and offered up in vain. If we look in the ordinary Actions of Life, we hold it to be abſurd to beg any Favour of him whom we profeſs to hate, whom we declare our Enemy, whom we revile, affront and deſpiſe. All this we do to God by every deliberate ſin, and himſelf profeſſeth Hatred and Abhorrence of ſinful Men. But that the Prayers of Men ſhould obtain any Benefit from God, it muſt be ſuppoſed that they are dear and well-pleaſing to him. As among human Benefactors, a Kindneſs is always ſuppoſed to precede the Benefit. But far be it from a rational Man to believe, that Sinners can be dear to God, or receive his Favour. Or if Man could flatter himſelf into ſuch a Belief, yet the expreſs Denunciations of God will not ſuffer him to entertain it: who far from allowing any kindneſs or favour to them, proclaims that *there is no peace unto the wicked.*

Eminent and innumerable promiſes of Favour are indeed annexed to the Prayers of penitent Sinners; but for this reaſon, becauſe by Repentance they ceaſe to be ſinners. If the Repentance be true, perfect, and ſerious, the Sinner thereby cleanſeth his Soul, and in that Moment may

may be truly ſaid to *lift up holy Hands in Prayer*. If not ſo, an imperfect or a feigned Repentance will no more promote the Efficacy of Prayer, than if the Supplicant had ſtill continued in the open Practice of his Sins.

Nor ought this to be any Diſſwaſion from early and conſtant Innocence, that the ſame Promiſes of Audience and Favour are annexed to the Prayers of penitent Sinners, as to thoſe of holy Men who *need no Repentance*, that is, no total Change of their Life and Actions. That was indeed objected by the envious Labourers in the Vineyard againſt the good Houſholder who rewarded the late-comers into his Vineyards *equally* with thoſe *who had born the Heat and Burden of the Day*, as an Act of Injuſtice, and unequal Diſtribution. To this it may be ſufficient to anſwer, what that good Houſholder, repreſenting God, in the Parable replied; *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is thine Eye evil, becauſe mine is good?* That is in a ſtrict Senſe, a man Pious from his Infancy, without any notorious Sin, deſerveth no more from God, than a penitent Sinner newly return'd to Obedience; yet to aſſert both the exactneſs of the Divine Juſtice, and to inforce a conſtant Holineſs

neſs from the Motive ariſing from this Conſideration, I will proceed in it a little further.

It is moſt true, that God hath promiſed pardon and Favour to the Petitions of repenting Sinners; that he will blot out their Iniquities, take away their Guilt, and remove the Puniſhment of their Sins. This he did to *Manaſſeh*, to the *Ninevites*, to many both under the Old and the New Teſtament. But we find neither Promiſe nor Example of any extraordinary Favour, beſide Pardon, conferred immediately at the Prayers of Penitents; ſuch as miraculous Deliverance from Enemies, Prolongation of Life, Communication of Benefits to others for their ſakes, Effuſion of eminent Graces, and the like. All which, ſeem to have been Rewards reſerved to Perſons of more illuſtrious and more conſtant Piety: who by a long Obedience gave undoubted Proofs of their Devotion to the Service of God; and were in their times as *ſhining Lights* in the World; ſuch as *Abraham*, *Moſes*, and *Daniel*, the Prophets, and Apoſtles, who were never defiled with any notorious Habit of Sin. And therefore as they diſtinguiſhed themſelves from the World by remarkable Acts, and uninterrupted habits of

of Piety, ſo they were diſtinguiſhed by God by viſible and extraordinary Benefits and Graces conſequent to their Prayers. Their Piety, Patience, and Obedience, were raiſed far above the Standard of latter times. No wonder then that we who have ſo far degenerated from their Example, find not the ſame Effect of Prayer; and that we even dare not to ask thoſe things which were ſo eaſily vouchſafed to them. Vol. 2.

Many indeed of thoſe extraordinary Benefits, granted at the Prayers of ancient Saints, were intended as ſo many miraculous Proofs of the Doctrine which they profeſſed; and under the Law were the only promiſed Reward; and under the Goſpel, were at firſt neceſſary to confirm the Faith; yet ſtill we may be aſſured, that the Efficacy of Prayer doth at this Day decreaſe with the Excellency of Piety, and may be raiſed with it.

A ſecond Reaſon of the Neceſſity of *lifting up holy Hands in Prayer*, is taken from the Nature and chief Deſign of it; which, as I before largely proved, is the Worſhip of God; in that it acknowledgeth his Dominion over Mankind, his Juſtice, his Power, his Goodneſs, and his Omniſcience. In praying to God, man declareth his Belief of all theſe Divine

Vol. 2. Divine Attributes, but without *lifting up holy Hands* at the ſame time, he affronts them all, defeats the End and Deſign of Prayer, and far from worſhipping God in it, denieth his Perfections, and overthroweth what otherwiſe he might be ſuppoſed to do. This we ſhall ſoon be convinced of, if we paſs through all the Reaſons, upon the Account of which, Prayer is an Act of Divine worſhip.

If it be conſidered as a Teſtimony of Obedience, becauſe the Practice of a Duty enjoyned by God; no leſs is that concomitant Purity commanded, for which we now plead. The ſame Authority which requireth Prayer, willeth withal that it be offer'd up with Innocence, and Purity of Mind. To perform the Act, and withold the Condition, is then no other than to confeſs an Obligation, and immediately to deny it. If Prayer includeth a Confeſſion of our Wants, and Imperfection, and Dependance upon God; continuance in Sin argueth that we have no Senſe of that Imperfection, that we affect to be independent from God, and exempted from his Government. If in that, Man profeſſeth Subjection to him, by not purging his Mind from Sin, he makes his Profeſſion to be

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no other than a Proteſtation againſt plain Fact. If there, he implyeth a Belief of the Juſtice and Goodneſs of God; here he manifeſts by his practice, that he thinks it not juſt to be deprived by his Laws the ſatisfaction of his beloved Luſts. If by addreſſing himſelf to God, he confeſſeth him to know all things, and to be every where preſent; by his Sins he pretends to eſcape his Knowledge and retire from his Preſence. If in the one he publiſheth a Belief of his Almighty Power; in the other he defieth the Execution of it. He boweth his Knee indeed and proſtrates his Body in Honour of God; but at the ſame time he giveth up the Government of his nobler part, the Soul, to the Adverſary of God, the Devil. Thus a Sinner wilfully continuing in ſin, deſtroyeth that Adoration, which by Prayer he pretendeth to pay to God. Nor is that the only Conſequence attending Sin in Prayer, that it defeateth the Act of Adoration, and obſtructeth the Rewards annexed to it. It farther involveth the Soul of Man in a moſt horrid Crime; in that he therein affronteth all thoſe Perfections of God, which in praying to him he profeſſeth to believe. The guilt of Perjury conſiſteth in committing the Fact, after a ſolemn

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Vol. 2. and deliberate Invocation of the Divine Preſence; and the guilt of Blaſphemy in reviling the Attributes of God, after a particular mention and profeſſion of them. Both theſe and many more Crimes are Acted, as often as a Love or Reſolution of ſinning is retained with Prayer. So that if the mind of Man were not depraved to a moſt deplorable Degree, it would fear to approach to God in Prayer without a perfect Innocence, that is, either Conſcience of having committed no ſin, or unfeigned Sorrow for it.

If we joyn all the Aggravations of ſins in one, we ſtill ſhall not conceive a greater than to fall down and worſhip God, profeſſing his ſupreme Dominion, and at the ſame time proceed to violate the Laws which he hath founded: to call him by the Glorious name of God, and acknowledge his Power; yet neither to revere his Majeſty, nor to fear his Puniſhments: to celebrate his Juſtice, and at the ſame time to defraud, oppreſs and injure: to own his Goodneſs, and at the ſame time to deny Compaſſion to his Creatures made in his own Image; to intercede with him for new Benefits, and employ thoſe already granted in oppoſing his Authority: to acknowledge the

the having received Life and Being from him, and not to yield him any Service for it: to confeſs his unlimited Knowledge and Preſence, and therewith retain ſecret Reſolutions of ſinning. All theſe are as hainous Provocations as the Soul of Man can poſſibly form; all yet are the neceſſary Conſequence of Praying with impure Hearts and Minds; and all yet receive this farther aggravation, that they are performed in the immediate Preſence of God, that is, in Prayer. Vol. 2.

Such are the univerſal Reaſons of *lifting up holy hands in Prayer*; but to thoſe who profeſs Belief in Chriſt there is a peculiar Reaſon, no leſs weighty than the former: Namely, that the Efficacy of our Prayers conſiſts in our Relation to Chriſt, and are granted merely for his Sake, and through his Merits; which is acknowledged in the Concluſion of all Chriſtian Prayers; and if our ſelves ſhould not acknowledge it, yet the Scripture would abundantly inform us, that he is our only Mediator, and that in him and through him all good things are derived from God to us. No Chriſtian therefore hath any other Title to the Favour of God, than his Relation to his Lord and Maſter the Son of God; which Relation cannot conſiſt without intire

Vol. 2. Obedience to his Laws and Doctrines, which are all directed to promote Purity, Juſtice and Holineſs. The want of theſe Conditions breaks off the Relation between Chriſt and Man; who then in vain ſupplicates in the name of Chriſt, when by diſobedience he ceaſeth to be his Diſciple. He may plead the Merits of the Death of Chriſt to be All-ſufficient, but himſelf hath no ſhare in them; he may fly to the Mercy Seat, but will find no High Prieſt to intercede for him; who by his Sins hath caſt off the Yoke of Chriſt, and even *Crucified him afreſh, and put him to an open Shame.*

II. The Second Condition of Prayer is, that it be offered up *without wrath*, that is without Malice or Hatred, which is no other than Anger grown inveterate. The Paſſion of Anger is indeed no leſs unlawful to thoſe that apply themſelves to Prayer; but that is not ſo much reſpected by the Apoſtle in this place, becauſe it is ſcarce credible, that while the heat of that Paſſion continueth, any one ſhould be diſpoſed to pray. While that Commotion of the Spirits, which attendeth Anger, laſteth, the Mind can attend to nothing elſe, and cannot direct its thoughts and deſires to God in Prayer; ſo that during that time it is not only impious

impious but unnatural to undertake it. Vol. 2.

In Prayer the Soul ought to engage its whole ſtrength and intention, and offer them up to God; which it cannot do, when the Affections of it are divided between Prayer and Anger. It ought at the ſame time to compoſe it ſelf in a ſedate and quiet Diſpoſition, to receive the Communications of the Divine Preſence and Favour; which it cannot do, while diſordered by any Paſſion.

Which Reaſon will alſo make Prayer unbefitting, and Devotion in Prayer impoſſible, not only in the heat of Anger, but alſo in ſuch an Hatred, as by Reaſon of the violence of it continually employeth the Paſſions of the Mind; eſpecially where the perſon hated is preſent to it, and alloweth to it no intervals of Calm and Quiet, until it be either ſatisfied with Revenge, or expireth with long time. Such a degree of Hatred is a conſtant uninterrupted Anger, which for the former Reaſon excludeth all poſſibility of Prayer during the continuance of it.

But ſuch a Degree is monſtrous; the moſt ordinary Caſe of Hatred alloweth frequent Intervals of Serenity to the Mind, frets not the thoughts continual-

Vol. 2. ly; and hath this immediate effect only that whenſoever the Memory of it doth return, or the cauſes upon which it was firſt founded are recalled to Mind, either Reſolutions or Deſires of Revenge are conceived, and a Purpoſe formed of not forgiving. Even this moderate and moſt ordinary Caſe of Hatred rendereth the Soul unfit for Prayer, and always defeateth the Succeſs of it.

For in Prayer, if directed and conceived aright, Man is ſuppoſed to reſign up his Affections and Faculties intirely to the Diſpoſition of God, to acknowledge him to be the ſupreme Judge of the World and Lord of all. But he who nouriſheth Hatred in his Mind, on the contrary, neither reſigneth up himſelf, nor confeſſeth the Dominion of God. For that very Affection he retaineth in oppoſition to his Will; and by ſeeking or deſiring Revenge, he maketh himſelf a Judge of the Merits of other Men, and the meaſure of the Puniſhments due to the Malice of their ſuppoſed Injuries, and thereby invades the Office and uſurps the Authority of God; who if he be indeed the ſupreme Lord and Judge of all, hath the only right to exerciſe ſuch a Judgment.

This Confeſſion therefore of Subjecti-

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on and Self-reſignation, which is ſo neceſſary in Prayer, cannot conſiſt with Hatred. And indeed the Senſe of a Prayer joyned with Hatred can be no other than this, *Lord I reſign up my ſelf to thy diſpoſal; but will not commit my Cauſe to thy Deciſion. I devote my Affections and Faculties to thy Service; but will not quit my hatred for thy command. I acknowledge thee to be the Sovereign Lord and Judge of all Mankind; but reſerve to my ſelf a right to judge and puniſh by Revenge my Enemy, who yet is my equal and thy ſubject.* So abſurd, incongruous, and repugnant are the thoughts and Petitions of a malicious Soul compared together, as do not only juſtly defeat the Succeſs of the Petition, but alſo deſerveth an eminent Puniſhment for daring thus to collude with God. Vol. 2.

But the chief Reaſon of the inconſiſtency of Hatred with Prayer is yet behind: Namely, the inſtitution of God; who may juſtly affix whatſoever Condition himſelf pleaſeth to his own Favours. And to the aſſurance of Succeſs in Prayer, he hath above all other Qualifications, pre-required Freedom from Envy, Hatred and Malice, and forgiveneſs of Injuries. This he hath commanded to be done, before any Act of Worſhip,

Vol. 2. and eſpecially that ſolemn one of Prayer, be paid to himſelf, as in *Matth.* V. 23. *If thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there remembreſt that thy Brother hath ought againſt thee, Leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy way; firſt be reconciled to thy Brother; and then come and offer thy Gift.* He hath made this the indiſpenſible Condition of Pardon to Mankind. *Forgive, that ye may be forgiven. For if ye forgive Men their Treſpaſſes; your heavenly Father will alſo forgive you. But if not, neither will your Father forgive your Treſpaſſes*, Matth. VI. 14. He hath inſerted this Condition into that Prayer, which he hath given both as a Form, and as a Pattern, to all Chriſtians. *Forgive us our Treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that Treſpaſs againſt us*; that ſo as truly, ſincerely and unfeignedly as we deſire Pardon, ſo truly and really we may Pardon others; and not only profeſs Pardon to others in uſing this form of words, but alſo renounce all hopes or claim of Pardon from God, if what we then profeſs, we do not indeed intend.

All the Benefits of God which we implore by Prayer proceed from his own Beneficence, and are undeſerved by Men. If he vouchſafes to grant them, he may well be allowed to affix what Conditions himſelf

himſelf pleaſeth to them. He might have commanded ſome very difficult Preparation, ſome extraordinary return of Thanks; but when he hath reſolved all into a Condition ſo eaſie, ſo agreeable to our Nature, ſo much conducing to the Happineſs of Mankind, as the mutual remiſſion of Injuries; he hath left Men without excuſe, and manifeſted that all the Duties exacted by him are deſigned rather for their Benefit, than the increaſe of his own glory. Vol. 2.

If it ſeems a hard Condition to forgive thoſe many Provocations and Injuries, which one Man may receive from another, without any Compenſation or Satisfaction; we ought to conſider, how much greater Provocations, and more numerous Injuries the beſt of Men have offered to God, and how much more they ſtand in need of his Pardon. We are injured by others, who are our Equals, who poſſibly have no Dependence on us, have received no Obligations from us, and may have been provoked by us; but we by our Sins offer violence to our Creator, by whom we ſubſiſt, on whom we depend, who hath conferred on us already eminent Benefits, and intends yet greater. We may have been injured once or twice; but whoever calls to mind

Vol. 2. mind the wandring Thoughts, the impure Desires, the vain Imaginations, and perhaps the more flagrant Sins of any one day, will find, that he hath more grievously offended God in that little time, than by all the Injuries of other Men he can have been provoked in his whole Life. If then, it be necessary to deprecate the Anger of God for the Sins of any one day, and much more for the sins of a whole Life; and Pardon be offered by God upon no other Condition, than Freedom from wrath and hatred, it will be no less our Interest than our Duty *to lift up holy hands in Prayer without wrath.*

III. To this Condition the Apostle adds in the last place, that Prayer ought to be offered *without doubting.* The word in the Original signifieth a Disputation and reasoning in the Mind concerning an Opinion, and in this place concerning that Opinion, which all true Believers ought to entertain of the Efficacy of Prayer. This doubting may relate either to the whole System of Religion, or to the peculiar Promises concerning Prayer, or to the particular worthiness of the Supplicant.

In the first Case it is evident, that doubting overthrows the Success of Prayer.

Prayer. *He that cometh to God, muſt firſt believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of thoſe who ſeek him*; that is, he muſt be fully perſwaded of it. If he doubts, he diſhonoureth God, and cannot perform the Eſſential parts of Prayer. For ſhall he be ſaid to commit himſelf entirely to God, who queſtions his Exiſtence? Or can he rely upon God, who is not ſatisfied that he is Infinite or Almighty? The leaſt mixture of doubt herein taketh off ſo much from that Submiſſion, Reliance, Subjection and Devotion, which ought to intervene in every Act of Worſhip, and more particularly in Prayer; which thereby ceaſeth to be perfect and ſincere. Vol. 2.

So alſo in the Articles of Chriſtian Religion, upon which the Efficacy of Chriſtian Prayers are chiefly placed; in vain doth he plead in the Name of Chriſt, who is not well aſſured of the Dignity and the Merits of Chriſt. Audience of Prayer is promiſed as a Reward of Faith, which cannot conſiſt with doubting. It is the confidence and aſſurance which we have in God and Chriſt, which procureth Acceptance to our Prayers; if we firmly believe it, becauſe he hath ſaid it, if for the ſake of his Authority we eſteem things future as preſent to us, which

Vol. 2. which is the Condition laid down by our Lord, Mark XI. 24. *Whatſoever things ye deſire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye ſhall have them.* This made the Prayers of the ancient Saints and Patriarchs ſo ſucceſsful, as is at large deſcribed, *Hebr.* XI. that having ſeen the Promiſes afar off, they were perſwaded of them, and embraced them; and, as a ſure Teſtimony of their perſwaſion, quitted their preſent Pleaſures and Poſſeſſions in exchange for future Rewards.

It is ſaid of our Lord while converſant on Earth, that *he could not do many mighty works* among the Galileans, *becauſe of their unbelief*: and himſelf required it as the previous Condition of his miraculous Cures; *believe, and thou ſhalt be made whole.* Not that it was impoſſible to his Almighty Power to have wrought Miracles without the concurrent Belief of Men; but that he wrought not upon them, as upon ſo many Machines, but dealt with them as with rational Beings, and therefore diſtributed his Favours in proportion to their Faith. And herein an imperfect Faith, or a cold perſwaſion will not ſuffice; St. *Peter* demonſtrated much more, when he adventured himſelf upon the water at the command of Chriſt;

Chriſt; yet becauſe he ſtill retained ſome doubt and fear, our Lord permitted him to ſink, that ſo he might reprove the imperfection of his Faith: *O thou of little Faith, wherefore didſt thou doubt?* Vol. 2.

A Second ſort of doubting, is a Diffidence concerning the peculiar Promiſes of Succeſs and Advantage conſequent to Prayer; when the Exiſtence or the power of God is not called in queſtion, but his Will diſputed; and it ſeems incredible that ſuch an Almighty and moſt perfect Being, having no need, and receiving no benefit from the Service or Prayers of Men, ſhould condeſcend ſo far as to beſtow ſuch eminent Favours, and ſo readily, at the Petition of mean and unworthy Creatures.

To overcome this doubt, it is ſufficient to manifeſt, that God hath indeed promiſed ſuch favourable Audience to the Prayers of Men; and for the truth of this, (becauſe I ſpeake to thoſe convinced of the Authority of Scripture) to remit you to thoſe many Promiſes contained in the Goſpel. The places are numerous and evident. I will now inſiſt but on one of them, namely the Parable of the unjuſt Judge, *Luk.* XVIII. delivered as the Evangeliſt ſaith *for this end, that Men ought always to pray, and not to faint*, not

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Vol. 2. to doubt of ſucceſs. There the unjuſt Judge is repreſented, as granting that to the importunity of a poor Widow, which neither the Juſtice of her Cauſe, nor the fear of God, nor the regard of Men could obtain from him. And this inference drawn from the whole, Verſe 7. *And ifſo, ſhall not God avenge his own Elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?*

To allure us to the practice of Prayer, Chriſt propoſeth the Efficacy of it with an unjuſt Judge. It had been ſufficient to have introduced the Perſon of a juſt and benign Man; that ſo his Juſtice, if compared with the Divine Clemency, might demonſtrate the force of Prayer. For if a good Man receives thoſe kindly who addreſs themſelves to him, how much more will God, the Greatneſs of whoſe Bounty exceeds our comprehenſion? It had been enough, as I before ſaid, to have propoſed the Perſon of a juſt Judge; but to repreſent a cruel, impious, inhumane Judge, unmerciful to others, but kind and eaſie to Supplicants; inſtructeth us, that even a wicked Nature may be by Prayer inclined to Lenity and Mercy. This therefore our Lord choſe to do, more lively to expreſs the force of Prayer.

Wheti

When in the next place, he carrieth us from the Conſideration of this ſevere Judge, cruel by Nature, but mollified by Prayer, to the Conſideration of God the Father, moſt good, kind, gentle, merciful, *ſlow to anger and forgiving ſins*, bearing with inſuperable Patience, the daily Affronts of Men, the Honours paid to his Adverſary the Devil, and the Contumelies therein offered to his own Son; what Succeſs may we not then hope to our Prayers made to him, if they be preſented with a dne Reverence, and neceſſary Preparation? The unjuſt Judge although *he feared not God, nor regarded Man*, yet did Juſtice to the Widow for her importunity. What Fear could not do, Prayer obtained. Neither Threats nor the Fear of Puniſhment could incline the Man to Juſtice; yet the Cries and Supplications of a poor Widow ſoftned his Nature, and made him tractable. If ſhe could obtain ſo much from a rough ill-natur'd Man; how much greater Kindneſs, Goodneſs and Love may we not expect from God, who always deſires to ſhew Mercy, but never to exerciſe Severity; whoſe very Threats and Puniſhments are intended for our good, and directed to deter us from Diſobedience? Vol. 2.

Let

Vol. 2. Let us once more review the effect of Prayer upon this unjuſt Judge, that we may the better diſcover the infinite kindneſs and love of God to Men. If he, who never willingly and of his own accord did any good, changed on the ſudden by the Petitions of a poor Supplicant, and was moved to Compaſſion; much more will the importunate Prayers of Men be prevalent with him, whoſe Nature includeth an infinity of Goodneſs; and who diſpenſeth the Emanations of that Goodneſs in vaſt and conſtant Benefits, even without intreaty. For who doth not ſee that the Light of the Sun, the influences of Heaven, the Fruits of the Earth, Riches, Life and Health are given by God to all Men, to the good and to the bad; and that only for his immenſe Kindneſs to Mankind, but if he ſo favours, cheriſheth and maintaineth thoſe who ask him not, and are not perhaps ſo much as ſenſible that the Benefit proceedeth from him; what will he not beſtow on thoſe, who ſpend a conſiderable part of their Lives in Prayer and Supplication?

The laſt Reaſon of doubting in Prayer is the Conſcience of unworthineſs in the Supplicant, which Conſcience is either founded in the natural unworthineſs of Man,

Man, or ariſes from the Senſe of his want of theſe Qualifications of Prayer, which are required to make it acceptable. The former falls in with that doubt, which I laſt ſpoke of, and the latter is in the Power of every Man to remove; and to perſwade the neceſſity and convenience of that removal, hath been the Subject of this days Diſcourſe, I ſhall therefore add no more upon this Head. Vol. 2.

Upon the whole it doth appear, that the Duty of Prayer is neceſſary, the place of it to be regarded, the poſture not to be neglected, the Conditions indiſpenſable, and the Succeſs certain.

The Eighteenth SERMON Preach'd on *May* 4. 1690.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Acts X. 40, 41.

Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly,
Not to all the People, but to Witnesses chosen before of God.

THE Resurrection of our Lord from the Dead, being so illustrious a Confirmation of the Truth of that Religion which he taught, so undeniable an Argument of the Divinity and Authority of his Person, so firm an Assurance of those Hopes which we conceive of our own Resurrection, deserveth at this Season more than a single Consideration. It is the knowledge and conviction of that, which chiefly Establisheth the Faith of a Christian, continueth his Expectations of enjoying hereafter a better State; and

and after a ſerious Meditation of the Actions of his Saviour here on Earth wrought for his ſake, compleats his Joy. Vol. 2.

In the ancient Church therefore, all the time between *Eaſter* and *Whitſunday* was dedicated to the Memory of this wonderful Myſtery, as was manifeſt by the particular expreſſions of Joy, during that whole Seaſon, in the publick Offices and Ceremonies of the Church. And as the benefit of Chriſts Reſurrection doth no leſs extend to the Chriſtians of theſe Times, than to thoſe of more ancient Ages; ſo our Gratitude and Rejoycing in Memory of it ought to be no leſs intenſe.

It may be pretended, that thoſe ancient Chriſtians living nearer to the time of Chriſt, had more certain aſſurance of the Truth of the Fact related, than we now have at ſo great a diſtance; and that the Will of Man always acting agreeably to the perſwaſions of the Underſtanding, cannot now be ſo much affected by the conſideration of an uncertain Intereſt, as they were then, when the Experience of frequent Miracles rendred it moſt certain. Or that however the Apoſtles and thoſe Five hundred

Vol. 2. Disciples, who were blessed with the presence of Christ after his Resurrection, had no less just Cause of Joy than Admiration: Yet that others, who were not convinced of the same Truth by the report of their own Senses, could not but be less concerned at the relation, by how much the less they were ascertained of the reality of it. And as the Mind of Man is fruitful in inventing Arguments opposing the Obligation of Religion; some have been brought to doubt of, and others even to deny the Resurrection of Christ, upon this consideration, that after he is said to be risen from the Dead, he appeared not in Publick, conversed not in solemn Places and among the Multitude, as before; but only shew himself to some few Disciples of his own, whom he had chosen for that purpose.

To take off this Objection, and assert the Truth of our Lord's Resurrection, I will endeavour to manifest the reasonableness of that conduct of Christ related in the Text: *Whom God raised up, and shewed openly, not to all the People, but to Witnesses chosen before of God.* To this purpose I will divide my designed Discourse into these three parts.

I. That

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I. That to have ſhewed Chriſt after his Reſurrection to the whole unbelieving Multitude of the Jews, was unbecoming the Majeſty, Juſtice and Wiſdom of God.

II. That it would have failed of creating an univerſal Conviction.

III. That God hath notwithſtanding offered to Mankind ſufficient Arguments of reaſonable Conviction.

Firſt then, neither the Wiſdom, Juſtice and Honour of God, nor the deſign of Chriſts Miniſterial Office here on Earth, would permit him to expoſe himſelf after his Reſurrection to the publick View of the unbelieving World. As God is the Fountain of all Wiſdom, it is impoſſible he ſhould act any thing without juſt Cauſe and Reaſon. It is not in the ordinary direction alone of created Beings that he exerts not his Power without juſt occaſion; upon which account it hath been long ſince received as an Axiom in Philoſophy, that Nature works nothing in vain; but alſo in the diſpenſation of Spiritual Concerns, in founding Methods for the Salvation of Mankind, he proceeds by juſt and adequate Rules exactly fitted to produce the effect intended: Fitted, I mean to

Vol. 2. produce that effect, if the Will of Man, which is herein the Subject of the Divine Operation, rejects not wilfully what is intended for its benefit. In that caſe God ſeeks not other Remedies, exceeds not the ordinary Rules of Salvation fix'd by him, nor employeth new and more powerful Engines to effect his Deſign. Thoſe he before employed were ſufficient, and that they ſhould fail of their end, is to be aſcribed, not to their want of Force, but to the Wickedneſs of Man hardening his Mind againſt receiving the effects of them.

Thus God giveth to every Man a Power of Acting according to the dictates of Reaſon, of overcoming the violent Motions of his ſenſual Appetite, of reſiſting all Temptations offered to him. If notwithſtanding this, Man uſeth not his Free-will aright; if he yieldeth to his Paſſions, and embraceth ſinful Temptations, God doth not by his Almighty Power reſtrain theſe ſinful Actions, or violently over-rule the inordinate Motions of the Will of Man.

When the Serpent tempted our firſt Parents, God, if he had pleaſed, might as well have interpoſed before their conſent to the ſuggeſtion of the Serpent, in eating

eating the forbidden Fruit, as he did afterwards denounce their Puniſhment; and had he done ſo, it is ſcarce poſſible to be imagined that they would have dared to tranſgreſs; yet would it be unreaſonable to have required, that God ſhould have interpoſed in ſuch a manner. He had given them ſufficient ſtrength of Will to maintain their Innocence; and having done that, juſtly left them to their own choice. Vol. 2.

Thus alſo after the Fall of Man, God hath granted to Man, in vertue of particular Promiſes and Covenants, ſuch a Meaſure of aſſiſting Grace, as may repair the weakneſs of the Will enervated by that Fall, and fully enable him to diſcharge the ſeveral Duties required of him: But if neither with this the Will of Man directs it ſelf aright, God doth not double, treble, or multiply his Grace, or put a force upon the Will. That were not to deal with Man as with a rational Being; and to over-rule or force the Will, would be to take away the very eſſence of Good and Bad, which conſiſts in the free determination of the Will.

And as God directs his moſt wiſe Methods in relation to the Will of Man, ſo alſo he acts in relation to his Under-

ſtanding. He hath propoſed ſufficient Motives of Conviction to every point which he requireth to be believed by Man: If he gaineth not aſſent, he proceeds no farther, heapeth not one demonſtration upon another.

To apply this to the caſe of the Reſurrection. Our Lord, in his triennial Preaching before his Crucifixion, had offered to the Jews abundant reaſon to perſwade them of the Authority of his Miſſion, by almoſt daily Miracles, by proving that the ancient Propheſies concerning the Meſſias did clearly belong to his Perſon, by viſible declarations from Heaven, by his own incomparable Perſwaſions, by the Preaching of *John* Baptiſt and his Apoſtles. After ſo many and evident Arguments produced in vain, and rendred ineffectual by the perverſeneſs and unreaſonable Prejudices of the Jews, Can we think it juſt to require, that God ſhould change his Methods, and propoſe other yet more forcible Arguments? Or muſt we not confeſs that God had done enough, and that to go yet farther, were to exceed the bounds of Reaſon, and depreſs the Majeſty of God? He had before the Deluge, when no ſuch extraordinary Methods of Conviction

viction were employed, juſtly reſolved, *My Spirit ſhall not always ſtrive with Man.* And after ſo many Miracles wrought by Chriſt, ſo many Revelations conferred on the unbelieving Jews, to have ſtill ſtrove with their unbelief by the publick Manifeſtation of Chriſt after his Reſurrection, would have been unneceſſary and unreaſonable. Vol. 2.

Thus the Wiſdom of God was concerned to deny to the unbelieving Jews, the perſonal Converſation of Chriſt raiſed from the dead. His Juſtice alſo may well be thought to have inclined him to the ſame. That People in rejecting the Meſſias, in oppoſing the evidence of his Doctrine, in withſtanding the force of his Miracles, had committed as great a Sin as the Soul of Man is even capable of; had offered as great an affront to the Majeſty of God, as can poſſibly be conceived. So ſignal an Impiety deſerved a no leſs eminent Puniſhment from the Hands of God. The viſible Execution of which Puniſhment might be deferred, as it was for near forty Years, till the total Deſtruction of their Nation; yet other Puniſhments leſs viſible, but no leſs grievous, the Juſtice of God did immediately inflict; and that was, *In giving*

giving them up to their own Hearts Lusts, and letting them follow their own Imaginations; not offering to them the most undeniable Argument of the Truth of their Messias, the Conviction of his Resurrection by their own Senses, when they had rejected all those precedent Arguments, which would more than have sufficed to convince and inform them, if their wicked perverseness had not prevented the Conviction.

They had by denying belief to the Doctrine of Christ, confirmed by so many and such evident Arguments, declared themselves to be given up to *a reprobate Mind*, and far from deserving so great a Blessing, as the Conversation of the Son of God now raised from the Dead. That was a Favour, than which a greater could not be granted to the Apostles. And then what was given by Christ to his beloved Disciples, as a reward of their Faith and Patience, could not in Justice be communicated to the worst of Men.

Nor doth it extenuate the Guilt of the Jews therein, that they proceeded according to their present Judgment, and acted upon the Direction of a mistaken Conscience. For first, it is manifest, that

that many of them oppoſed him, even while inwardly convinced of the Truth of his Miſſion, and the Arguments of it; as thoſe did to whom he upbraided the Commiſſion of the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. And then Conſcience ſimply is not the Rule and Warrant of humane Actions, but Conſcience directed by right Reaſon. God hath given to Man a faculty of Underſtanding as well as Will; full Power of judging right in all Matters abſolutely Neceſſary, as well as of following the report of this Judgment when made. He requireth a like right uſe of both theſe Faculties, and puniſheth equally the Miſcarriage of either, if it concerns matters of Obedience to himſelf, or of ordinary Duty. In which caſe, it is no leſs Fatal or Criminal to pervert the Underſtanding, than to corrupt the Will; and then, to plead Ignorance or a miſtaken Conſcience, will be no more allowed, than to plead Drunkenneſs for Crimes committed in that abſence of right Reaſon. Vol. 2.

There is not in all Hiſtory a more enormous Sin to be found, than the Infidelity of the Jews, and the Crucifixion of their Meſſias by them; none ſo ſeverely branded in Scripture, or puniſhed with ſo

Vol. 2. ſo remarkable a Judgment in this Life: Yet our Saviour hanging on the Croſs declared that thoſe his Perſecutors *knew not what they did.* And altho' he then, out of the abundance of his Charity, interceded for their Pardon, yet the Juſtice of God would not grant it, much leſs continue to them the former Favours of Heaven. And ſuch would have been the viſible and publick Preaching of Chriſt after his Reſurrection.

Farther, the Honour of God was engaged herein; nor was it agreeable to the Divine Majeſty, that the Perſon of Chriſt, after his Reſurrection, ſhould be expoſed to the publick view of the Nation of the Jews. Reaſon did require, and all the Prophets had foretold, that the Meſſias ſhould paſs through a double State, that is of Humiliation and Glory. In his State of Humiliation, before his Death, he had undergone all the Miſeries, Ignominies and Calamities, to which humane Nature is ſubject. He was preſſed with the want of the Neceſſaries of Life, was afflicted with the Inſults, Provocations and Injuries of the Jews, was delivered up into the Hands of wicked Men to be treated at their Pleaſure. To theſe meritorious Sufferings

ings was to enſue a State of Glory; wherein Chriſt ſhould be placed far above the Rank and the Power of mortal Men, ſhould be exempted from the infirmities of Nature, and enter upon an everlaſting Kingdom. This State of Exaltation was begun in his Reſurrection, perfected by his Aſcenſion, and continued without interruption to all Ages. Vol. 2.

It was not then agreeable to the Divine Honour, that the Sacred Body of the ever Bleſſed Jeſus now exalted to a State of Glory, ſhould be again ſubjected to the Attempts and Perſecution of the Jews. That it ſhould be expoſed to the rage of Men, and reduced to his former mean Condition. Yet all this could not have been avoided, if Chriſt had appeared publickly among the People after his Reſurrection. The ſame Hatred and Perſecution would have returned, unleſs he had pleaſed by a Miracle to reſcue his Body from their Attempts. A Miracle indeed was no leſs eaſie to his Almighty Power, than any other ordinary Operation. Yet the Honour of God is concerned not to work Miracles, but for great Reaſons; and the Impiety of that People deſerved not to have a

Miracle

Vol. 2. Miracle conferred on them: Or had Christ appeared openly among them, even altho' he could have been secured from their Persecution, it must either have been in his former meek and humble Habit; and as such, they would have despised him; or what they greedily expected, as a glorious Prince, armed with Power and temporal Greatness; and that was contrary to his Design, who declared his Kingdom not to be of this World.

Nor in this respect only was the publick appearing of Christ after his Resurrection, contrary to his Design for which he came into the World. To have then publickly manifested himself for this purpose, to have removed the incredulity of the Jews, and convinced them of the Truth of his Mission, would have been to have continued his Prophetical Office after his Crucifixion: For therein did his Prophetical or Ministerial Office consist, in declaring the Will of God, in preaching of Repentance, in converting of Sinners. This Office was to expire with his Life; and after his Resurrection, his State of Glory, and therewith his Regal Office was to commence. Upon which account, himself when ready to expire upon

upon the Croſs, ſaid, *It is finiſhed.* All the parts of his Miniſterial Office were now fully compleated, not to be perſonally renewed again. He had performed all that the Divine Wiſdom had determined to be effected by him in Perſon, towards the Converſion and Salvation of the World; the reſt he was to commit to his Apoſtles and their Succeſſours. Himſelf was no longer to remain in *the form of a Servant*, which he had taken on him; but entring upon his Kingdom, to govern that Church which he by his former Preaching and Death had founded. I proceed to the ſecond Propoſition namely. Vol. 2.

II. That even if Chriſt, after his Reſurrection, had appeared and converſed Publickly, it would yet have failed to produce an univerſal Conviction, and remove all Doubts. This is undeniably manifeſt in reſpect of our ſelves, for whom we are moſt concerned, and of all Ages ſubſequent to that time: For allowing that the whole Nation of the Jews had been ocular Witneſſes of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, yet all other Perſons, both of that and all ſucceeding Ages, would have had no other Proof than what we now have, that is, the Teſtimony

Vol. 2. mony of those who saw him after his Resurrection. All others, even in that case, would have equally wanted the Demonstration of Sense, and must have depended upon the Relation of others. So that all the certainty which any can have of Matters seen and related by others, we have; unless we imagine that *five hundred* cannot as certainly judge of a plain Matter of Fact as so many millions. And even if so many Millions had seen it, we should not have expected, that every one should severally commit it to writing, and so testifie it to us; we must still have relied upon the Testimony of some few Historians, and that in this case we have. So that notwithstanding the number of ocular Witnesses was then confined to *five hundred*; we who were not Blessed with that Sight, have the same Evidence of it, as if all the Members of Mankind then living had seen it.

Whatever force therefore the Objection might have in that Age, it hath none in ours. We have sufficient Arguments offered to us to prove the Truth of it; equal and even Superiour to those, upon which we believe the Truth of any Matter of Fact, which our selves did not see.

And

And if we reject theſe Argument, it is not probable that even Demonſtration would move us, if it could be had. Vol. 2.

For whatever Men, may pretend in excuſe of their Infidelity, it is moſt certain, that he who will not believe what is propoſed to him upon reaſonable, altho' but probable Motives, will not even yield to Demonſtration, if the Truth propoſed oppoſeth his Luſts and Paſſions. And this indeed is the true cauſe of all thoſe Doubts, which unreaſonable Men produce in defence of their unbelief. It would be too groſs and ſhameleſs to aſſign the true Cauſe, and alledge that they will not ſubmit to the Yoke of Religion, becauſe it checks their Vices, reſtrains their Luſts, forbids the Gratification of many beloved Paſſions. They would gladly be eſteemed to act Reaſonably in ſhaking off this encumbrance from them; and therefore pretend they cannot believe the Divinity of that Religion which lays it on them. Whereas in truth, they ſeldom conſider the Arguments recommending the Truth of any Religion, leaſt the Obligation of it alſo ſhould return into their Minds. Or if they cannot avoid the Thoughts of it, yet their Wills ſtruggle againſt their Underſtanding. They would eſteem it the greateſt

Vol. 2. Unhappineſs which can befal them, to be throughly convinced of that Truth, which if obeyed, would deprive them of all their darling Pleaſures.

For the Truth of what I here advance, I appeal to your own Experience. View all theſe Scepticks in Religion, and ſee if you can find any in all your Knowledge, who make any Conſcience of obſerving moral Vertues, of being Chaſt, Temperate, and Juſt. It is the Impoſition and enforcing of theſe Vertues, which hath made the Chriſtian Religion grievous and diſtaſteful to ſuch Men; not the want of Evidence of the Truth of it. Theſe Pretenders are ſeldom of ſuch raiſed Capacities as to diſcern between true and falſe reaſoning, with greater accuracy than other Men; or to diſcover the weakneſs of an Argument, which before their Sagacious Enquiry was univerſally allowed. They wilfully betray their Judgment, or rather the Pretence of it, to the depraved inclination of their Wills; which that they may enjoy, they are content to undergo the Ignominy of groping at Noon-day, and not diſcovering a Truth ſet in ſo great a Light. But this Conſideration being more general, I diſmiſs it; only reminding you how unjuſtly an Objecti-

on

on is raiſed by theſe Men from Chriſt's not publickly appearing after his Reſurrection; ſince if he had ſo done, the Evidence of his Reſurrection at this diſtance of time could have been no more than now it is. Vol. 2.

Farther, not only would the publick appearance of our Lord after his Reſurrection have been of no advantage to *us*, but would even have failed of convincing, at leaſt converting the Jews, who ſhould have been Spectators of it. The Jews had continued their Infidelity notwithſtanding ſo many hundred Miracles, that it could not be hoped the Addition of one Miracle more ſhould create a Belief among them. They had rejected all thoſe many undeniable Proofs, which our Lord was pleaſed to offer to them in Teſtimony of his Divine Miſſion; and after the long Experience of ſuch a ſtrange Perverſeneſs, it is ſcarce credible, that the Reſurrection alone ſhould effect, what all other Arguments and Proofs joyned together could not perform.

In the firſt Place, the Prophecies contained in the Old Teſtament, (to the Divine Authority of which the Jews did own Submiſſion) all the Predictions and Deſcriptions concerning the Meſſias deli-

vered in it, were to them the moſt cogent Argument which could be offered. By the Concurrence and Completion of all theſe Propheſies in the Perſon of Jeſus, it did ſo evidently appear, that he was the Chriſt, that they could not deny it, without proclaiming at the ſame time their disbelief of thoſe ſacred Oracles. And then as our Lord truly ſaid in a not unlike Caſe; *If they would not believe* Moſes *and the Prophets, neither would they have been perſwaded, though one roſe from the dead*; although himſelf had roſe from the Grave in the ſight of the whole Nation. If the greateſt Argument had no effect upon their Minds, leſſer Proofs would certainly loſe their Force.

However, becauſe it may with ſome ſhew of Reaſon be alledged, that however the Concurrence of the ancient Propheſies in his Perſon were in the Nature of things the better Argument; yet that Miracles as being more ſurprizing, and more affecting the Mind of Man, were the more effectual Demonſtration; let us compare the Miracles of Chriſt wrought before his Crucifixion, with the Evidence which would have been produced by his Reſurrection, if he had been pleaſed viſibly to manifeſt it to the whole Nation of the Jews.

The

The number of Miracles, which we find recorded in the Evangeliſts, is very great; and yet St. *John* aſſureth us, That what is written contains but a ſmall part of the Actions of Chriſt. Every one of theſe Miracles gave as full a Proof of that Divine Power by which they were wrought, as the Reſurrection could have done. Vol. 2.

The Reſurrection indeed is infinitely more conſiderable to us Chriſtians; than any other Miracle; becauſe it is the aſſurance of our own Reſurrection, the entrance of our Lord upon his ſtate of Glory: But to Unbelievers, it is of no more Efficacy than the many other Miracles wrought by him.

What could be more admirable than that he commanded the Elements, *the winds and the ſeas, and they obeyed him*: That he removed Infirmities, and cured all manner of Diſeaſes immediately and by a ſingle Command? What greater Proof could be offered of his own Divinity, than that he did this by his own Authority, without invoking the name of God, or intreating his Preſence? If ſtupendious Acts were required; what more wonderful than his feeding whole multitudes with a few Loaves? If nothing

Vol. 2. leſs than the ſenſible Experience of his raiſing the Dead to Life could convince them, what more notorious than the raiſing of *Lazarus* known to the whole City of *Jeruſalem*; than the raiſing of the Widows Son of *Naim*, performed in Preſence of the whole City attending him to his Grave; than the Bodies of Saints departed ariſing at his Crucifixion, entring into *Jeruſalem*, and appearing unto many?

If in all his Miracles precedent to his Death, the Jews not able to deny the Fact, pretended they were done by a Diabolick Power, (a Pretence more than once alledged in their own *Talmud* extant at this day, and publiſhed by themſelves) the ſame Pretence would with equal Reaſon have been retained after his Reſurrection. For if the abſolute diſpoſal of Life and Death were to them, the only confeſſed Proof of a truly Divine Power, it was offered to them in raiſing thoſe to Life, whom I before mentioned, Although by other Arguments he had given abundant Demonſtration, that he acted not by any Commiſſion from infernal Spirits. The whole Deſign of his Doctrine tended to overthrow the Power and Dominion of the Devil; to root out Idolatry

Idolatry and Sin, whereby Mankind was held Captive to the Devil; to eſtabliſh Truth and Piety, than which nothing could be more contrary to the intereſt of Hell. His Miracles conſiſted chiefly in caſting out Devils from the Bodies of unhappy Perſons, whom they had poſſeſſed, than which nothing could be more ungrateful to them: in relieving the Wants, and curing the Infirmities of Mankind, than which nothing could be more oppoſite to their Practice and Inclinations, who always endeavoured the Deſtruction, but never the benefit of Mankind. Vol. 2.

This ſame Power of working Miracles he communicated to his Diſciples long before his Crucifixion; which refuteth the idle Pretence of the Jews in the *Talmud*, that his miraculous Power was a perſonal Quality, obtained by unfolding a Spell placed of old by *Solomon* in the Temple. All theſe Proofs of Divine Power, our Lord had exerciſed among the Jews for three years together; and that not in private, in a corner, among his own Followers, but in all the great Cities of that Nation, in the Preſence of multitudes, in their Streets and Synagogues, before the Scribes and Phariſees,

Vol. 2. riſees, the moſt Learned, and diſcerning Men among them; in the ſolemn Feſtivals and Concourſe of the Jews at *Jeruſalem*, where *every Male* was bound *to appear three times a year before the Lord*, and where Chriſt never failed to be preſent, and to declare his Miſſion by Miracles, and by Oral teaching. So that it is not improbable but that every Male of *Judea*, arrived to Man's Eſtate, had at the time of his Death perſonally ſeen ſome Miracle wrought by him. Even at his Death, ſuch manifeſt Indications of his Divinity appeared, that an unprejudiced Heathen, the Roman Centurion, who guarded his Croſs, could not forbear to confeſs *that he was the Son of God*, that is, in the Language of the Heathens, a Divine Perſon.

Yet notwithſtanding all theſe Proofs and Miracles, it was found that the Jews retained their Infidelity; that far from being converted by them, even while the Senſe of them remained, they did affront and revile him; accuſed him of Combination with the Devil, even while they ſaw him caſt out Devils; and were ſcandalized at his Doctrine, even before they had digeſted the Bread, wherewith he had miraculouſly fed them; as we read, *Joh.* VI.

What

What then could be concluded from this whole Carriage of the Jews, but that they were a People, whom no Arguments could perſwade, no Miracles could affect; who deſerved no farther to be regarded by God, and who would have treated the viſible Reſurrection of Chriſt, with no leſs Contempt than they had done his former Miracles. Vol. 2.

It is at firſt ſight ſomewhat incredible indeed, that Man endued with a rational Soul, could poſſibly ſo far deprave his Reaſon, as to withſtand ſuch powerful Arguments, and deny the Truth ſet in ſo clear a Light. And ſome have not failed hereupon to object to the whole Hiſtory of the Life of Chriſt, that it is impoſſible he ſhould have wrought ſo many Miracles; ſince had he done it, it cannot be conceived that the Jews ſhould disbelieve him, and deny Aſſent to his Revelations. But alas! who can account for the Perverſeneſs of the Will of Man, or the Failures of his Underſtanding? A little reflection upon our own Experience of humane Life will convince us, how groſs, and to us unaccountable Errors, many Men commit: How often a Matter, which ſeems moſt clear and evident to us, when propoſed to others, cannot

or

or will not be underſtood by them.

To recurr to more particular Examples; this very Nation of the Jews continued ſtubborn, incredulous, and rebellious amidſt all the Miracles, which *Moſes* wrought in the ſight of them. They murmured againſt him, even while they ſubſiſted by his miraculous Miniſtry; and notwithſtanding all the wonderful Benefits and Puniſhments of God daily viſible to them for Forty years together, often renounced their Allegiance to the true God.

Nor are they the former Ages only, which have committed ſuch prodigious Miſtakes; even in our own Age, we have no leſs eminent Inſtances of unaccountable Corruption of underſtanding in ſome Men, which becauſe they are ordinary and common we ceaſe to wonder at; but in Truth had the Ancients by Revelation foreſeen them, they would have no leſs admired the Folly of ſubſequent Ages, than we now do the Errors of precedent times.

To name only one now among many; who could have then believed, that in the latter times of the World, there ſhould exiſt a large Society of Men, who ſhould pretend to eat their God,

to

to devour his Body ten thouſand times, and yet retain it whole; to divide it into as many parts, every one of which ſhould be equal to the whole; and infinite other like Abſurdities? And yet this we know the Papiſts do. Vol. 2.

Upon the whole, it ought not to be concluded, that becauſe ſuch a Perverſeneſs of Will or Corruption of Judgment cannot be well conceived by us, or ſeems incredible to us, judging according to the Nature of the things themſelves; that therefore it is impoſſible Mankind ſhould be ever Guilty of them. For it doth appear, that there is no Error ſo groſs, no Miſcarriage ſo enormous, which Man may not commit. And that if the Jews had ſeen and handled the Body of Chriſt after his Reſurrection, it is more than poſſible, that they who had rejected ſo many antecedent Proofs, would have been inſenſible of this alſo; but it is moſt certain, that they were not worthy, to whom ſuch a Favour ſhould be granted.

It remains, That I ſpeak to the third and laſt Conſideration, that notwithſtanding our Lord vouchſafed not to the unbelieving World, the viſible Preſence of his Body after his Reſurrection; yet that

Vol. 2. that he hath by other Methods offered to Mankind ſufficient Arguments of reaſonable Conviction of the truth of it. This was abſolutely neceſſary, not only in Relation of the reſt of the World, who had not ſeen his precedent Miracles; but alſo in regard of his undertaking to the unbelieving Jews, whom demanding a Sign from him, he had referred to his Reſurrection from the Dead after three days continuance in the Grave. And this he hath effectually performed by the Teſtimony of unexceptionable Witneſſes, his Apoſtles and other Diſciples; who as they were well aſſured of the Truth of it themſelves, ſo they were fitted and enabled to teſtifie it to the World, beyond all Contradiction.

They had ſeen and Familiarly converſed with their Lord after his Reſurrection; handled his Body; clearly perceiv'd that a rational Soul was united to it, and the Divinity to both, as before his Reſurrection. They were afterwards enabled to teſtifie this to all Nations of the World, by the gift of Tongues; and to do it ſucceſsfully, by the Power of working Miracles, not only conferred upon themſelves, but upon whomſoever they laid their hands for that Purpoſe. They confirmed

ed the Truth of their Teſtimony by vo- Vol. 2.
luntary layingd own their Lives, by un-
dergoing all the Hardſhips of Life; the
Perſecution of the Jews, and the Con-
tradiction of Heathen Philoſophers, all
which none can be ſuppoſed to have been
done without an inward Conviction of
the Truth of what they Preached. And
if they were indeed ſo convinced, it is
impoſſible that in forming their Judg-
ment of it they ſhould have been mi-
ſtaken. Or if it can be imagined, that
any ſhould be ſo Vain-glorious, as to
forego the Pleaſures of Life, and ſuffer a
Death in defence of what they knew to be
falſe, yet are we not in this Caſe permitted
to believe it, by Reaſon of the many and
wonderful Miracles wrought by them, by
the various Operations of the Holy Ghoſt
working in them, and communicated by
them; by which God himſelf gave a con-
current Teſtimony to the Reſurrection of
Chriſt preached by them, and ſet to his
Seal, that what they taught and affirmed
was true. But of this Head, I need add
no more, having more largely treated of
it in my Diſcourſe upon *Eaſter-day*, which
I will not repeat.

The

The Nineteenth SERMON

Preach'd on *June* 1*ſt*.

1690.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Mark XVI. 19.

So then, after the Lord hath ſpoken unto them, he was received up into Heaven, and ſat on the right hand of God.

WE lately celebrated the Memory of the Aſcenſion of our Lord; and the Offices of our Church direct us to employ our thoughts upon it, in this intermediate time between that and *Whitſunday*. To do this, we are not only induced by that near Relation, which it bears to Chriſt, who by it took his laſt Farewel of his Diſciples, and entred upon the Poſſeſſion of his Kingdom; but alſo by thoſe eminent Benefits, which the whole

whole Church received from it, the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt, the Confirmation of Faith, and the increaſe of Hope. Vol. 2.

In Diſcourſing of it, I will confine my ſelf to theſe three Conſiderations.

I. The neceſſity and convenience of the Aſcenſion of Chriſt.

II. The Truth of it.

III. The Advantages and Benefits, which we receive by it.

I. That it was neceſſary our Lord ſhould leave the Earth, and aſcend into Heaven, himſelf often declared, and in *Joh.* XVI. 7. gives the Primary Reaſon of it. *Nevertheleſs I tell you the truth; it is convenient for you, that I go away; for If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will ſend him unto you.* The Miſſion of the Comforter, that is, the Holy Ghoſt, was abſolutely neceſſary, and the neceſſity of it confeſſed by the Diſciples of Chriſt; yet could not this be effected, until Chriſt ſhould aſcend into Heaven. It was Convenient for the Apoſtles that the Comforter ſhould be ſent, as by whom they received a moſt invincible Confirmation of their Faith and their Hopes.

What greater Conſolation can be imagined

gined to Disciples afflicted for the Departure of their beloved Lord, than to receive such an infallible Assurance of his being placed in Power and Glory in Heaven, as did arise from the eminent Operations of Divine Power brought down by the Holy Ghost at his Intercession? What stronger Confirmation of their Faith could they receive, than that the Promises of their Master concerning a Comforter were effected, which demonstrated the Truth of all he had said, the actual Possession of that Glory, which was vailed in the Infirmities of his humane Nature, while he conversed upon Earth, and the Prevalency of his Intercession with God the Father in their behalf? What more could be desired to assure them of the continuance of their Masters Love after his Departure, or to enable them successfully to discharge that Office of converting an unbelieving World, which was imposed on them; than that such Gifts should be conferred on them, as were never before vouchsafed unto Mankind; the knowledge of all Tongues, the Faculty of speaking Eloquently and Boldly, and the Power of working Miracles? All these Reasons made it convenient and desirable to the Apostles,

Apoſtles, that the Comforter ſhould be ſent unto them. Vol. 2.

To the whole Church this was much more neceſſary, which without that Miſſion could never have had Exiſtence, being founded and maintained by thoſe Divine Gifts and Influences, which were derived from thence. Yet neither could the Apoſtles, nor the Church have been Bleſſed with this ſo neceſſary, ſo often Promiſed, and ſo much to be deſired Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, had not our Lord firſt aſcended into Heaven, and there by his Power and Interceſſion have procured it. The Comforter, as he was to be the Advocate, the Deputy, to plead the Cauſe of Chriſt on Earth, could not naturally take place but in his Abſence; and the very Miſſion of him, as it was an Act of Regal Power, could not be adminiſtred by Chriſt until he had taken Poſſeſſion of his Kingdom, which commenced at his Aſcenſion into Heaven.

Nor is this the only Reaſon, which made it convenient for the Church, that our Lord ſhould remove his viſible Preſence from us; but the Poſſibility, at leaſt, the increaſe of Man's Reward did depend upon it. The Deſign of the coming of the Meſſias ſo long expected was

Vol. 2. known and confeſſed to be to reſtore the loſt Happineſs of Mankind, to redeem them from their former Miſery, and to advance them to a State of Glory. In proſecution of this Deſign, if we conſider either the Wiſdom of God, or the Nature of Man, it could not but be expected, that this Happineſs ſhould be affixed to certain Rules, conſequent to certain Conditions to be performed by Man; not indifferently beſtowed on all, nor yet on any without Reſpect to their peculiar Merits. The Application of it was to be directed and determined according to the right uſe of Reaſon, and Free-will in every Man. The whole of this conſiſts in Obedience to the Laws of God, and one great Branch of it, in aſſenting to his Authority, and believing all his Revelations. And as an Aſſent to all the Revelations of God, made at all times, was the Duty of Man; ſo more eſpecily an Aſſent to thoſe laſt and moſt conſiderable Revelations made by his own Son incarnate was required of Man, and was farther intended to qualifie him for the Reception of that ſuper-natural Happineſs which was by him to be conveyed unto the World: Since no greater Evidence of a right uſe of Reaſon and Veneration

of

of the Divine Majeſty could be offered, than to inquire after, to Aſſent to, and obey the Revelations communicated by him. Vol. 2.

It would be tedious and unneceſſary to repeat thoſe great Commendations of this eminent Act of right Reaſon call'd Faith, and thoſe many Promiſes of Reward annexed to it, which may be found in the Scripture. But from the whole it appeareth, that this was to be the principal Condition of the Juſtification, and therein of the Happineſs of Man. That this Act therefore might be the more Illuſtrious, and might be Crowned with a more noble Reward, it was convenient that Chriſt ſhould withdraw his viſible Preſence from the World, and therein give way to the Operation of Faith, *which is the Evidence of things not ſeen.*

Had Chriſt continued for ever upon Earth in that glorious Majeſty, which was to take place after his Reſurrection; had he preſented to the Senſes of every Man ſenſible Demonſtrations of his Divine Power; in that Caſe, to have believed on him, would have been no more praiſe worthy, no more meritorious, than to aſſent to the ordinary Reports of Senſe.

Vol. 2. Who ever pretended to have acquired Merit by believing an Axiom of Mathematical Demonſtrations? Or who ever thought it an Argument of a true and juſt management of the Will and Underſtanding, to believe that one Colour differeth from another, or that the *Sun doth ſhine*? Theſe things ſtrike our Senſes, and force a Belief whether we will or no; in this Caſe, to offend while the Soul enjoys its Reaſon, and the Body the Organs of Senſe, is not ſo much as poſſible.

To have believed the Divinity of Chriſt, while the Senſe of an illuſtrious Miracle wrought by him was yet preſent; to confeſs he came in the Fleſh, while his Body was yet viſible; to acknowledge his Reſurrection from the Dead, when the Senſes of every Man proclaimed no leſs; all this would have been ſo ſlight an Argument of the right uſe of Reaſon, ſo little deſerving any Commendation or Reward, that it would be no more than the neceſſary reſult of the Faculties, and even not in the Power of the Will to avoid.

But when the Object is removed from the Senſe, and yet diſcovered by Reaſon; when the Eye doth not ſee what the

the Affections ſtill embrace, when the Soul ceaſeth not to hope upon probable and juſt Motives, what it never received by Demonſtration of Senſe; this is indeed a noble Act of right Reaſon, worthy of a ſpiritual Being, and worthy of a Divine Reward. And ſuch a Reward hath our Lord annexed to it; pronouncing *Joh.* XX. 29. *Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.* This Bleſſedneſs Chriſt by his Aſcenſion hath communicated to the whole Church; which without that, had wanted the Qualification of a rational and well grounded *Faith*, to acquire the Favour of God. Vol. 2.

Further the Aſcenſion of our Lord, and therein his Exaltation to the ſupreme Degree of Glory, was in Juſtice due to his precedent meritorious Sufferings; which are therefore aſſigned as the cauſe of his Exaltation by St. *Paul*, Phil. II. *He made himſelf of no Reputation, and took upon him the form of a Servant*, &c. *wherefore God alſo hath highly exalted him*, &c. The Humility manifeſted by him in his Incarnation, in the whole Courſe of his Life, and in his Paſſion, infinitely ſurpaſſed all the Examples of former times. That the Son of God ſhould vouchſafe to deſcend from his Seat of Glory in Heaven, to leave the

Vol. 2. Boſom of the Father, and cloath himſelf with the Infirmities of humane Nature; that in this Nature he ſhould not take upon him the Majeſty of a Prince, nor ſo much as allow himſelf the ordinary Satisfactions and pleaſures of it; but live an afflicted Life, and die a ſhameful Death; and all this for his own Creatures, who far from deſerving ſuch a Favour from him, had rebelled againſt him from their Creation, would lay violent hands upon themſelves, and continue their Contempt of his Authority till the Diſſolution of all things; this was ſuch an extraordinary Humiliation, that none other but the Son of God could have effected: And therefore was in Juſtice to be Crowned with ſuch a Reward, as none but the Son of God could receive; namely, that the Body, which had been thus depreſſed, ſhould be raiſed above all Creatures, ſhould be placed above Angels and Archangels, ſhould be advanced to the immediate Preſence of God, ſhould for ever remain united to the Divine Nature, and therewith be tranſlated into the principal Seat and Throne of the Deity, that is, into Heaven.

Laſtly, To name no more Reaſons; it was neceſſary for Chriſt to aſcend into Heaven, that ſo he might *fulfil all righteouſneſs*,

teouſneſs, perform all which the ancient Prophets had foretold of the Meſſias, or he had denounced of himſelf. It was long ſince Typified by the Ceremonies uſed by the High Prieſt among the Jews in the Day of Propitiation; which repreſented the Final Attonement to be made by Chriſt for the Sins of the World. It was commanded by God, that the High Prieſt ſhould enter but once every Year into the Holy of Holies, that is, upon that Day, when with the Blood of the Sacrifice he paſſed thro' the Tabernacle and the parts of it into that place. Vol. 2.

It was a received Opinion among the Jews, that the Holy of Holies repreſented the Heaven of Heavens, and the Tabernacle this viſible World. From which Opinion joyned with the legal Ceremonies of that day, it appeared, as the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* argueth, IX. 11, 12. *That the High Prieſt of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle not made with hands, was to enter into the holy place, having obtained eternal Redemption for us:* That he ſhould lay down his Life as an Expiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of the People, and being ſlain ſhould paſs thro' all the Stages of this World here below,

Vol. 2. and aſcending into the higheſt Heavens, the Throne of the Divine Majeſty, ſhould there preſent his Blood; Blood of that ineſtimable value, as need not be ſhed and preſented every year; but *as he once appeared in the* lower *World to put away ſin by the Sacrifice of himſelf*; ſo once for all he aſcended into the higher Heavens, not to appear again, until he ſhall come in the Clouds with Majeſty and great Glory, to judge the quick and Dead.

The ſame was foretold by the Prophet *David*, Pſalm LXVIII. 18. and from thence urged by St. *Paul*, Epheſ. IV. 8. *Thou haſt aſcended up on high* (into Heaven, as it is in the common Acceptation of the Original word) *thou haſt led Captivity Captive, thou haſt received Gifts for Men.* A Propheſie, which, notwithſtanding all the Pretences of the Jews, can neither be applied to *Moſes*, nor to *Joſhua*, nor to *David* himſelf, nor to any illuſtrious Conqueror of that Nation, who never aſcended into Heaven, but to Chriſt alone; who really and bodily aſcended into the higheſt Heaven, unto the Throne of the Majeſty of God.

By his Death and Reſurrection he ſubdued Sin, Death, Hell and the Devil; and in his Aſcenſion viſibly triumphed

phed over them, and led them Captive. When that Body, which by the Sacrifice of it ſelf had deſtroyed Sin, was in Reward of that meritorious Suffering, advanced into Heaven, there to be continually preſent with God; when that Body which had been ſubjected to Death, and afterwards was raiſed from it, received now a certain Proof of its Immortality, was raiſed into Heaven, where is no place of Corruption left; when the Captain of Man's Salvation viſibly aſcended unto the eternal Place of Happineſs, having firſt Promiſed to draw all his faithful Followers after him; and from whence he diſpenſed the precious and glorious Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt to the Sons of Men. Vol. 2.

If theſe Propheſies and Types foretelling and prefiguring the Aſcenſion of the Meſſias ſhould ſeem obſcure, yet it cannot be denied, that the Meſſias was to receive a glorious Kingdom. This, we are well aſſured, the Nature of our Lords Office, the Deſign of his Coming, the Dignity of his Perſon permitted him not to receive on Earth; and therefore it was neceſſary he ſhould aſcend into Heaven, there to take Poſſeſſion of it.

It had been a mean Reward to his Humi-

Vol. 2. Humility, Patience, and Sufferings preceding his Reſurrection, to have been advanced to a temporal Kingdom, to be dignified with a Reward common oft-times to the worſt of Men. The greatneſs of this World was inconſiſtent with his Deſign, the Pleaſures of it were contemned by him; and that Divinity, which was no longer to be clouded or depreſſed, but to ſhine forth in its full Luſtre, could find no fit Habitation upon Earth, which in Scripture is ſaid to be *the footſtool of God.* Upon all theſe Reaſons, it was neceſſary, juſt, and convenient that Chriſt ſhould aſcend into Heaven.

II. And that he really did aſcend thither, (which was the 2d Head propoſed) evidently appeared, from the Hiſtory of his Aſcenſion recorded in the Goſpels and Acts of the Apoſtles. That Body of Chriſt which the Apoſtles had *felt and handled*, that with which they had converſed *for forty days together*, that whereof they were aſſured *by many infallible Proofs*, that it was no other than the material Body of Chriſt which hung upon the Croſs, and was laid in the Grave, which was united to the Soul again, and had performed all manner of vital Actions; that very Body they ſaw aſcend into Heaven.

Heaven. For that Jeſus, who had roſe again and converſed with them, who had led them out of *Jeruſalem*, and was viſible and preſent to them, till the very moment of his Aſcenſion, as he was yet ſpeaking with them, *was parted from them and carried up into Heaven*; as we read, *Luke* XXIV. Which refutes the Opinion of thoſe ancient Hereticks, who taught that Chriſt aſcended in Spirit only, having firſt put off and returned to the ſeveral Elements that Body, which he had received from them. Vol. 2.

Again that Body, which the Apoſtles ſaw and felt to be locally preſent with them upon Earth, they ſaw ſoon after to be really removed from the Earth and carried into Heaven. For as it is related in the ſacred Hiſtory, *When he had ſpoken unto the Diſciples and bleſſed them* (which being performed by laying his hands upon them, teſtified his real and corporeal Preſence with them in that moment; in the next moment, even) *while he bleſſed them, he parted from them, and while they beheld he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their ſight.* Which proved his Aſcenſion to have been a true proper and local Tranſlation from the parts here below to thoſe above; and

Vol. 2. and that at that moment he was indued with a perfectly humane Body, whatever glorious Changes it underwent after its Reception into Heaven, the Seat of Immortality and Spiritual Beings. Other Circumſtances deſerve to be obſerved in the Hiſtory of this Aſcenſion, And

Firſt, Our Lord at his Aſcenſion was pleaſed to call together many, if not all his Diſciples, and admit them to the ſight of it; a Favour which was not vouchſafed to them at his Reſurrection. The Conduct indeed was different, but the Reaſon not unlike in both Caſes. Both the Reſurrection and Aſcenſion of Chriſt were thenceforth to paſs into neceſſary Articles of Belief, to the principal ſupports of the Faith and Hopes of Mankind; both therefore was to be placed beyond all doubt and contradiction, by the Atteſtation of many and credible Witneſſes.

To effect this at his Reſurrection, it was not neceſſary that any witneſſes ſhould be preſent; ſince the Actions of Life, viſibly and in the Preſence of many, performed by him after his known Crucifixion and Burial, abundantly and even demonſtratively proved, that he was really

really riſen from the Dead. They were well aſſured, that ſome few days before he was truly Dead, their Senſes aſſured them that he was now truly alive: Whence they might as certainly conclude that he was riſen from the Dead, as if they had actually ſeen his Reſurrection. Vol. 2.

Whereas in the Caſe of his Aſcenſion, he was to be taken from them, no more to be ſeen by them in this Life; no Mortal was thenceforward to ſee his State of Glory, or teſtifie his Station in Heaven: Upon which account it was abſolutely neceſſary that his Diſciples ſhould be preſent at his Aſcenſion, and be Eye-witneſſes of that Action, which afterwards they were to teſtifie and preach to others.

In the ſecond Place, it deſerveth to be obſerved, that the Teſtimony of Angels was added to that of the Apoſtles. Thoſe bleſſed Spirits, far from repining that the Nature of Man in Chriſt was by his Aſcenſion exalted to a ſuperior Degree of Glory, deſcended from Heaven to bear the glad Tidings of his Arrival there, as at his Nativity they had done to proclaim the Deſcent, of the Deity upon Earth. For it follows, Acts I. 10. *Behold two Men ſtood by them in white Apparel,*

Vol. 2. *parel, which also said, Ye Men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven. This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into Heaven.*

Nor was this Apparition of Angels an empty Pageant or an unnecessary Addition to the Glory of our Lords Ascension. By their Ministry and Attendance, they demonstrated the Divinity and Dignity of his Person; by their Testimony concerning his Ascension, they proved the truth of it. The Apostles indeed saw him received upon the Clouds, they looked up and followed him with their Eyes, as far as their sight could reach; but that being terminated in the lower Regions, and not able to penetrate into the highest Heavens, their Sense could not assure them that their Lord was carried thither. To evidence therefore the truth of it, it remained, that God by these ministerial Spirits should declare it to the Disciples.

These Angels were wont to Minister before and see the face of God in Heaven; they were known to come down from thence. They testified that Christ had ascended thither from whence they had descended, and thereby perfected the

the Teſtimony of the Diſciples concerning the Aſcenſion of Chriſt into Heaven, whoſe ſight could not reach ſo far. Farther, theſe bleſſed Spirits, not only brought Evidence to the Diſciples of the real Aſcenſion of their Maſter into Heaven, but alſo gave them Comfort, and alleviated their ſorrow conceiv'd for his Departure, by adding thoſe words, *This ſame Jeſus which ye have ſeen taken up from you into Heaven, ſhall come in like manner as ye have ſeen him go into Heaven.* Vol. 2.

Eliſha had ſeen his Maſter *Elijah* carried up into Heaven; yet knowing not certainly how the Divine Goodneſs would diſpoſe of him, and deſpairing of ever ſeeing him again, he entertained the ſight with Grief, and in Teſtimony of it rent his Clothes. Nor had the Diſciples been free from the ſame Anxiety, without the preſent Conſolations of theſe Angels. When their Lord had before his Death declared to them his Reſolution of returning to the Father, (*John* XVI.) they could not diſſemble their Grief, as himſelf obſerveth, Verſe 6. *Becauſe I have ſaid theſe things unto you, ſorrow hath filled your heart.* And immediately before his Aſcenſion, ſtill retain-

Vol. 2. retaining their erroneous Opinion of a temporal Kingdom to be founded by him, they had asked him *whether he would* not *at that time reſtore the Kingdom unto Iſrael*, which hopes were totally defeated by his Departure into Heaven.

Both theſe occaſions of Sorrow therefore, the Angels happily do remove in theſe words. They aſſure them that the Preſence of their Maſter ſhall not be for ever taken from them, but themſelves ſhould ſee him return in the laſt of days; and that they may not imagine his Kingdom to be aboliſhed, they add that he ſhall return in like manner as they ſaw him go, that is, in *Power and great Glory*; as our Lord deſcribeth his coming to Judgment, *Matth.* XIII. 26. It will be of little uſe to inquire into what part of the Heavens the Body of our Lord was tranſlated; yet not unfit to obſerve, that our Lord is ſaid to have aſcended into thoſe Heavens, by which the moſt glorious Preſence of the Divine Majeſty is in Scripture expreſſed. Thus it is ſaid of him, *Epheſ.* IV. 10. *He that deſcended is the ſame alſo that aſcended far above all Heavens*, and Hebr. VII. 10. *That he was higher than the Heavens*, and Heb. IX. 12. *paſſing into the holy place, even into Heaven*

Heaven it ſelf, to appear before the Preſence of God, that is, he was advanced to the ſame ſtate of Glory with God the Father; his Body was tranſlated to the place of his more immediate Preſence in Heaven, which is fully expreſſed by his *ſitting at the right hand of God*. Vol. 2.

To determine the place, whether in the third, in the fourth, or above the Heavens, is raſh and unwarrantable. But this we may be aſſured, that whatſoever part of Heaven is the immediate reſidence of the Divine Majeſty, whatſoever Region is moſt Holy, whatſoever Place is of greateſt Dignity in thoſe Celeſtial Orbs; thither Chriſt aſcended, and there now Reigns in Glory.

III. The Advantages, which the Church and all the Members of it received from the Aſcenſion of Chriſt, are many and great. The firſt and moſt eminent Benefit derived from it was the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, of which I ſpoke before. A Benefit, which was indeed more ſenſible in the Apoſtolick times, when it communicated to many the gift of Tongues, the power of working Miracles, or a Prophetick Spirit; but is at this day no leſs advantageous; ſince by the Influences and Operations of the Holy Ghoſt the Church is ſtill maintained,

Vol. 2. the Faithful are enabled to perform their Duty, and the unfaithful are converted. Thus the Aſcenſion of Chriſt became a laſting Benefit to all his Followers, procuring to them thoſe Graces, which otherwiſe could never have been obtained. The Aſcenſion of *Elijah* made one *Eliſha*, left a double Portion of his Spirit with one Diſciple to be communicated to no other; but the Aſcenſion of Chriſt was of univerſal Benefit, producing bleſſed Effects, which ſhould extend to all Believers, and to all Ages.

A ſecond Benefit of the Aſcenſion of our Lord, is the Confirmation of our Faith, which from thence received firm Aſſurance of the truth of his Doctrine and the Divinity of his Perſon. He had proclaimed to the unbelieving Jews, as well as to his own Diſciples, in the VI. of St. *John*, that he would aſcend into Heaven. *What and if ye ſhall ſee the Son of Man aſcend up where he was before?* After his Reſurrection he ſaid unto the Women, *Go to my brethren and ſay unto them, I aſcend unto my Father and your Father.* It was not therefore unexpected to the Apoſtles, they were acquainted with his Reſolutions herein, and when they ſaw effected what he had before foretold them, they could no longer doubt that he

he was the true Meſſias. Thus although the Prophetical Office of our Lord expired upon the Croſs; all his ſubſequent Actions offered convincing Arguments to Mankind of the truth of his Miſſion, and the certainty of thoſe things he taught. No greater Proof of either could be imagined than his Reſurrection from the Dead; and when to this was added his Aſcenſion into Heaven, there was no more place left for doubt. Vol. 2.

Thus the Faith of the Apoſtles was confirmed by the Aſcenſion of Chriſt, but their Hopes were much more exalted. By this glorious Triumph they ſaw him put into Poſſeſſion of that ample Power, which they ſo long wiſhed to be aſſumed by him, which might enable him to reward his Followers, and effect thoſe Promiſes which he had made to them. In *John* XIV. he had told them there were *many Manſions in his Fathers houſe*; and that he *went before to prepare a place for them*, intending to receive them afterwards to himſelf, that *where he was, there they might be alſo.* The former part of the Promiſe they ſaw to be effected in his Aſcenſion, and thence conceive aſſured Hopes that the latter would be accompliſhed.

There can be no greater Motive to

Vol. 2. believe the truth of Propheſies or Promiſes, than to conſider the performance of thoſe which went before. The ſame foreknowledge of our Lord, which foreſaw the Exaltation of himſelf, could as eaſily foreſee the like Reward to be given to his Followers; and the ſame Power which advanced him to the right hand of God, could exalt whomſoever he pleaſed into Heaven. So that his Power could not be queſtioned; and his Will therein he had often declared, aſſuring them, *Joh.* XII. 32. *When I am lifted up from the Earth, I will draw all Men unto me.*

Herein the Hopes of all Mankind received increaſe and ſtrength. They had all impatiently wiſhed for Immortality; it was eaſie to believe that their Souls ſhould ſtill exiſt; but their Bodies were equally parts of themſelves. They were equally concerned for the future Happineſs of both; yet that either ſhould be hereafter Happy, they were aſſured only by the Revelation of Chriſt. He affirmed it, he promiſed it, he confirmed it by wonderful Signs and Miracles; yet it could not but ſeem ſtrange, that *Fleſh and Blood ſhould inherit the Kingdom of God*; that ſuch a groſs corporeal Being ſhould be admitted to the Society of Angels;

Angels; that Man who was excluded from an Earthly Paradiſe, ſhould be taken up to the immediate Preſence of God. All this did ſeem incredible, till they ſaw an Example of it in the Body of Chriſt, which conſiſting of the ſame Fleſh and Blood, partaking of the ſame Nature, was viſibly received into Heaven, and placed in eternal Happineſs. Vol. 2.

By this they were convinced, that the like Immortality of their own Bodies was not impoſſible; and while they conſidered the Promiſes of Chriſt, and their own Relation to him, that he was the firſt Fruits of humane Nature, their *forerunner which is entred into Heaven for them*, the Captain of their Salvation, and the Head of their Society: they were fully ſatisfied that it ſhould in time be granted to them; ſince what he foretold of his own Aſcenſion they ſaw effected; ſince it was but natural to follow their Captain, their Head, and their Forerunner; and with him to be received into the place of their deſired Happineſs.

Farther, as Chriſt is our King and our Prieſt, the Benefits which we hope to receive from either of thoſe his Offices, received increaſe by his Aſcenſion into Heaven. As King, he is thereby inveſted

in the actual Dominion of his Church, enabled to beſtow upon her all thoſe Graces and extraordinary Aſſiſtances, which are neceſſary for her Well-being. As our Prieſt, his Interceſſions with God the Father in our behalf, are made much more prevalent by his perſonal Preſence with him.

Under the Law, the Efficacy of the great Propitiatory Sacrifice depended upon its being preſented by the High Prieſt, in the Holy of Holies, the place where God was pleaſed to Promiſe his immediate Preſence. How much more Efficacious then muſt be conceived to be the Interceſſion of our High Prieſt; who not once a year but continually; *not with the Blood of Bulls or Goats, but with his own Blood*; not in an Earthly Tabernacle, but in the higheſt Heaven, maketh Interceſſion for us? If the Mediation of the Jewiſh High Prieſt could avert temporal Puniſhments due to the Sins of the People; much more will the Mediation of our High Prieſt free Mankind from eternal Puniſhments. If their Prieſt being cloathed with the ſame Nature could more ſenſibly commiſerate the Unhappineſs of his People; our's for the ſame Purpoſe took our Nature on him. But whereas

whereas their Prieſt was ſubject to the Guilt of the ſame Sins for which he interceded, our's knew no Sin; their's was admitted no farther than to the Symbols of God's Preſence, to the Cherubims and the Mercy Seat, our's to the very Throne of his Majeſty; where he continually pleadeth his Sufferings on our behalf, diffuſeth his Graces to us, and prepareth Manſions for us. Vol. 2.

Laſtly, if we conſider Chriſt as the great exemplar of humane Life, his Aſcenſion will upon that Account alſo be of great uſe to us, teaching us with him to exalt our Affections, to withdraw them from the Earth, and to place them in Heaven. This Inference the Apoſtle draweth from his Reſurrection and Aſcenſion, Coloſ. III. 1. *If ye be riſen with Chriſt, ſeek thoſe things which are above, where Chriſt ſitteth at the right hand of God.* Chriſt died to the World, to inſtruct us, that we ought to mortifie our worldly Luſts, to reſtrain and ſubdue to Reaſon the uſe of Carnal Pleaſures. He left the World and aſcended into Heaven, to teach us that there our Affections ought principally to be fixed, that there our chief Intereſt placed, and there only perfect Happineſs to be expected. Could the

Vol. 2. Pleaſures, the Power, and the Proſperity of this World have given the moſt complete Happineſs; our Lord, who deſerved it by the moſt complete Obedience which was ever paid, who was more dear to God than all the Sons of Men, who was himſelf *heir of all things* and *Lord of all*, would have fixed his abode here, and not removed it into Heaven. But when immediately after his Exaltation, as ſoon as he began to receive the Reward of his Obedience and Sufferings, he forſook the Earth, and returned into the Boſom of his Father, he hath thereby inſtructed us, that in vain is true Felicity to be ſought here below; that this World can afford no adequate recompence for Vertue and Piety; that we are indeed but *Strangers and Pilgrims upon the Earth*; and that as many as purſue the end of their Creation, and ſtudy to be truly Happy, ought to *ſeek a better Countrey*, even that into which *Chriſt the forerunner is entred for us, that ſo where he is there we may be alſo*, receive the ſame Reward, and be Crowned with the ſame Happineſs; that ſo as we have *imitated* his Aſcenſion, we may ſhare in his Glory. *Which, God of his infinite Mercy Grant.*

Th:

The Twentieth SERMON Preach'd on *July*, 13*th*. 1690.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Matth. V. 16.

Let your light ſo ſhine before Men, that they may ſee your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

THESE words are part of our Lord's Sermon upon the Mount, which was directed to a mixed multitude of Auditors, and treats altogether of univerſal Duties incumbent upon all, who receive the Doctrine, and acknowledge the Authority of him who ſpoke it.

Upon which Account we have juſt reaſon to reject the Opinion of thoſe, who

Vol. 2. who would reſtrain to the Apoſtles only and their Succeſſors, the Preachers of the Goſpel, the Duty preſcribed in this and the three foregoing Verſes: which requireth the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, not to confine the exerciſe of their Duty to their ſingle Breaſts, or reſt ſatisfied in having diſcharged the Office of Piety in ſecret; but to perform ſuch eminent Acts of Devotion, Temperance, and Charity, and ſo to direct them, as may promote the Glory of God and Inſtruction of Men.

The whole preceding part of this Sermon was directed to all Chriſtians in General, delivering the Promiſe of thoſe Beatitudes, in which all the Diſciples of Chriſt are equally concerned. What follows, Treats concerning the general Laws of Juſtice, Temperance, and Charity: ſo that with no good Reaſon can theſe intermediate Verſes be reſtrained to the Apoſtles only. If they are here called *the Salt of the Earth*, Verſe 13. our Lord addreſſed himſelf in the ſame words *to great multitudes*, as we read, *Luk.* XIV. 25. If they are ſtiled *the light of the World* in the 14th. Verſe; St. *Paul* applieth the ſame Expreſſion to the *Philippians*, II. 15. exhorting them

them to be *without rebuke in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe Generation, ſhining among them as Lights in the World.* Vol. 2.

It muſt be acknowledged indeed, that the Apoſtles were, and their Succeſſors in the Miniſterial Office ought to be, more eminently, *the Salt and Light of the World*, purging away the Corruptions, removing the darkneſs of Mankind, by Example and Inſtruction. To effect this by their Doctrine, is peculiar to them, not common to other Chriſtians: to promote it by their Example, is a Duty common to them with all other Chriſtians.

It is my preſent Purpoſe to treat of it as an univerſal Duty; to which my Text directs me, by placing the Light of this Exemplarineſs, which is commanded, not in verbal Inſtructions, but in good Works, which are acknowledged to be the Duty of all Chriſtians. Of this then I will Diſcourſe under theſe Four Heads.

I. The Duty impoſed, ſuch an exemplary Conduct, as may become *a Light of the World.*

II. The manner of being thus Exemplary, *by good Works.*

III. The

III. The end, to which it ought to be directed, *the Glory of God.*

IV. The good Effects of it, the Inſtruction of Men, and Promotion of the ſame *good Works in others.*

I. Concerning the Duty, which is that of an illuſtrious Example, to the practice of which our Lord hath directed us both by his Laws, and by his own Example. He ſtiles himſelf, and truly was, *the Light of the World*; he was foretold under the Figure of *the Son of righteouſneſs*, who ſhould enlighten the World with his Doctrines, and demonſtrate the Poſſibility of Performing them by his own Example. His Precepts chiefly concern Moral Duties, which he reſtored, firſt to their Primitive Notions and Purity; and then urged the Practice of them upon his Followers, in a more ſtrict manner than had ever before been done. What before was eſteemed an attempt fit only for great and noble Minds, he made the Duty of all the Members of Mankind: what others thought a ſufficient Glory to practiſe ſingly, to excel in this or that ſingle Vertue, he required to be performed conjunctly, without the Omiſſion of any thing which is juſtly to be accounted laudable.

For

For if we conſider the great Lines and main Parts of the Doctrine of Chriſt, they will be found to direct the Practice of thoſe Actions, which by all the World muſt be acknowledged to be good and excellent, to be laudable and divine; ſuch as are Juſtice, Sobriety, Devotion and Charity. It is not among Chriſtians alone, that ſuch Actions are eſteemed Praiſe-worthy. All Parties of ſober Men, as well Heathens as thoſe profeſſing revealed Religions, have agreed in this common Sentiment, in the Veneration and Praiſe of all ſuch Vertues. Vol. 2.

From hence it was, that even when the Heathens derided the Faith of the Croſs, they ſtill acknowledged the Excellency of thoſe Perſons, who profeſſed it. They alſo were convinced, that all thoſe moral Vertues were the Perfection of Mankind: only in this they diſagreed: that whereas they accounted the uniform Practice of them to be an undertaking poſſible only to more exalted Minds, Chriſt had made it the Duty of all his Followers. Although even this difference of Opinion, could not but raiſe their Thoughts

to

Vol. 2. to an extreme Veneration of that Divine Perſon, who formed theſe Laws, and even forced from them a Confeſſion of that Praiſe which was due to ſuch an Inſtitution, and the Author of it.

Thus the very Nature of a Chriſtian Life, as it is directed by the Precepts of our Lord, fitteth it to be an eminent Example to others. He diſtinguiſhed his Religion from all others, by the Excellency of his Laws and Precepts: ſo that whoſoever ſhould obſerve them, muſt diſtinguiſh themſelves from the reſt of the World, by a more perfect exerciſe of Vertue and Holineſs. And hence it is, that he naturally infers in the twentieth Verſe: *Except your Righteouſneſs exceed the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no Caſe enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

The Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees was the exact performance of all the Legal Inſtitutions of the Moſaical Law, of Sacrifices, Waſhings and other Ceremonies; which (abſtracting from the poſitive Command of God) had nothing excellent in

in the Practice of them. To ſee the Jews killing their Sacrificed Beaſts, waſhing their Bodies often or Circumciſing themſelves, was no Motive of Holineſs, or giving Glory to God, to thoſe who were not of the ſame Religion. They diſcerned nothing laudable in all this; and were rather prompted to pity the Slavery, than to imitate the Devotion of their Service. Whereas the Practice of thoſe good Works, which Chriſtianity impoſeth is amiable and lovely in the ſight of all Men, ever carrieth along with it the Commendation and Approbation of all Spectators.

Thus our Lord fitted his Doctrine to be a light to the World; and leaſt it ſhould fail of its deſigned End, he hath commanded us to improve it to its right uſe, and therein hath led the way by his own Example. He confined not himſelf to a Deſart, as did *John* the *Baptiſt*; but converſed in their Cities, and more frequented Meetings; that all Men might ſee the conſtant Piety, Goodneſs and Charity, which attended all his Actions, be inſtructed by them, and drawn to the Imitation

tation of them. He indulged his Converſation to Publicans and Sinners; that he might gain them, firſt to a love of his Perſon, and then to an imitation of his Vertue. He diſdained not the Company of any, who might receive advantage from his Doctrine or Example.

And that he might fit his Life for an univerſal Pattern to all his Followers, he engaged not in the conſtant Practice of extraordinary Auſterities, as did *John* the *Baptiſt*; but amidſt the moſt ſevere and ſtrict Exerciſe of all Vertues, allowed to himſelf the innocent Pleaſures and Entertainments of the World. He refuſed not to ſit down with thoſe who invited him to ſplendid Entertainments, as with *Levi* and *Zacheus*, nor to be preſent at the Marriage-Feaſt. At other times he was content to ſuffer Hunger and Cold, Contempt and the vileſt Injuries, to undergo long watching in Prayer and Faſting. For ſo it behoved him even in this Senſe alſo, *to perform all Righteouſneſs*, who was to be the Grand Exemplar to all ſucceeding Ages: Not to confine himſelf to any one

one method of Life, leaſt thereby his Example ſhould become deficient to thoſe who ſhould be engaged in another; but to paſs through all the more ordinary Actions and Varieties of humane Life; that in all Caſes we might be able to approve and direct our Actions, by conforming them to his Practice, and if any doubt ſhould ariſe concerning them, might be able to juſtifie them by the Authority of his Example. Vol. 2.

Both the Obſervation therefore of the Precepts, and the Imitation of the Practice of Chriſt which are equally the Duty of every Chriſtian, engageth him to be exemplar in his Life and Conduct. And thus firſt the whole Body of Chriſtians will become a light to the reſt of the World, and then every Member of the Church to each other. Our Lord deſcribeth both in this place very lively. *Ye are the Salt of the Earth*, Verſe 13. The reſt of the World will remain in Sin and Corruption; but in the numerous Society, which I ſhall found and call by my Name, Piety and Vertue, and whatſoever is good and excellent, ſhall be

Vol. 2. maintained: Yet not to be confined to that Society alone, but to be communicated to all who ſhall receive Inſtruction from it. *Ye are the light of the World*, Verſe 14. The greater part of Mankind remain in Darkneſs and Ignorance; but I have placed my Church, as a glorious Light to diſpel this Darkneſs, and remove this Ignorance; that ſo all who do but lift up their Eyes, have the leaſt inclination to Truth and Goodneſs, may there diſcover the light and repair to it. And this cannot fail to take effect, while the brightneſs of this Light ſhall remain, while the Church ſhall continue glorious and unſpotted, while the Members of it ſhall all, or the more part of them, perform their Duty. For, as it followeth, *a City placed on a Hill*, or a Light placed in a Room, *cannot be hid.*

If indeed thoſe Vertues, which I command, be obſerved by thoſe who profeſs my Name; if Juſtice, Chaſtity, Beneficence, and other Marks of Goodneſs be indeed ſo eminently exerciſed by ſo numerous a Body of Men; it cannot be but the reſt of Mankind will take notice of it, and as many as

as deſire to be freed from Darkneſs, will approach to this Light: Or if thro' ſloth and negligence they ſtill continue afar off, however they will not be able to deny that they ſee the Light; and muſt admire both it, and the Author of it. Vol. 2.

Thus the meaneſt Chriſtian may make himſelf truly Exemplary, by performing his Duty conſcientiouſly in the Station, in which God hath placed him: Although his Underſtanding and Abilities have not fitted him to be an Example to others ſingly conſidered. If he well diſchargeth his ſingle Station, although never ſo mean in the Church, he contributeth to this great Deſign of Chriſt, of making his Church a light and example to the unbelieving World; and, in ſo doing, performeth the Duty preſcribed in this place, and entituleth himſelf to the Reward of it. Whereas every one deviating from this Rule, and violating the Laws of Chriſt, concerning moral or religious Actions, becometh a Spot in this light, an Exception to the Plea of the Church againſt Unbelievers. He defeateth one of the chief Advantages,

Vol. 2. which Chriſt propoſed to produce in founding of a Church; and thereby becomes Guilty not only of the miſcarriage of his own Soul, but alſo of the miſcarriage of all thoſe Infidels or prophane Perſons, who miſcarried for want of diſcovering that Exemplarineſs in the Church, which was to have convinced them.

If the Inſtitution of Chriſt herein be in theſe latter Ages in a great meaſure defeated, and no ſuch frequent or ſincere Effects of Converſion be to be found; it may well be reſolved into this Cauſe, that by the diſobedience and vicious Lives of the greater number of the Members of the Church, this once glorious Light is well nigh covered with Spots, and almoſt turned into Darkneſs.

This Luminary of the Church, never indeed was without Spots, even in its greateſt Vigour and Purity, in the beginning of the Goſpel: But while the number of them was inconſiderable in Compariſon of thoſe who performed their Duty, the Diminution of Light which aroſe from thence was ſcarce diſcernible. In ſucceeding

ing times, as the number of wicked Christians increased, the Light proportionably diminished, until our days, wherein the State of the first times of Christianity is so far inverted, that the number of Pious Christians is very small in respect of the others, and thereby the Light of the Church is almost extinguished. Whosoever then addeth to this remaining Light by his own single Piety, doth the greater Service; and whoever detracts from it by his ill Example, doth the greater Mischief, because every Addition and Diminution, is more sensible in a less than a greater quantity of Light. Vol. 2.

Thus all Christians may become Exemplar, in conspiring to complete the Example of the Church to those who are without it. For not every one is fitted in particular, and singly to make himself an Example to other Men. Many things must concur to that, which oftimes are not in the Power of Man. The minds of other Men, on whom his Example must be supposed to have any influence, must be first possessed with an opinion of his Wisdom, or Authority, or any other Quality,

Vol. 2. lity, which may induce others to follow his Example. And where ſuch Qualities are found, the Obligation of being Exemplar, becomes much more ſtrict. In that Caſe, he is not only to Act in common as a Member of the Church, but in particular alſo, as a Director of all thoſe, who may be influenced by his Example. Such are Parents to their Children, Maſters to their Servants, great Men to their Inferiors, Kings to their Subjects, wiſe and learned Men, to thoſe who have an Opinion of their Wiſdom and Learning. All ſuch are as Lights to thoſe ſubjected to them, whoſe Eyes are fixed on them, and are wont to form Directions to themſelves from their Practice.

And this is what God particularly requires of great and knowing Men, in return for their Power and Wiſdom, that they employ it for the Inſtruction, or Perſwaſion of others in the diſcharge of their Duties; their Power and their Knowledge, hath diſtinguiſhed them from the reſt of Men, and ſet them in an eminent Station, at leaſt in reſpect of thoſe who are ſubjected,

or

or inferior to them; and therefore every Action of them hath ſome influence, but ordinarily every Habit fixeth even a Rule to the Conduct of Inferiors, of whom the moſt part look no farther than to the demeanour of thoſe whom they ſuppoſe in Power or Knowledge to excel themſelves. If *they* obſerve no Rules of Order and Decency, *theſe* cannot ſo much as know them. If *they* practiſe forbidden Pleaſures, or give way to unlawful Paſſions; *theſe* will loſe even all Senſe of the unlawfulneſs of them. They will not be aſhamed to practiſe what they ſee their Superiors, the ſuppoſed Judges of Decency and Lawfulneſs, without fear to purſue. If *they* conſcientiouſly obſerve the Precepts of Religion, even reſpect to their Perſons, will engage others in the ſame Courſe of Piety; as being generally perſwaded, that thoſe who are greater and wiſer than themſelves, are more enabled to diſcover the means of attaining true Happineſs. Thus every good Man, fitted by the Opinion of others concerning him for being an Example to them, becomes a Vol. 2.

Vol. 2. publick Bleſſing. He enters not into Heaven alone; but carrieth with him the welcome Attendance of thoſe, whom his Example hath drawn thither with him.

It is not indeed in the Power of all Men to fit themſelves for ſuch Exemplars; yet moſt Men are concerned in this, as being Superior to ſome others, who are ready to take Rules of Direction from them; and not a few are placed in ſuch eminent Stations, as derive exceeding influence upon all thoſe who are ſeated under them. And ſuch, if careleſs of their Duty, become a Snare, and the occaſion of Deſtruction to all thoſe, who by their Example were betrayed into Sin. They fall not alone, but like *Lucifer* ſeated on an eminent Throne, draw Legions of Apoſtate Angels with them into Hell; for the miſcarriage of all whom they will be obliged to anſwer; and cannot plead, as do thoſe Sinners who Act in the loweſt Sphere, that thereby they hurt themſelves alone. Rather the guilt of ſo many Souls, ruined by their ill Example will be laid to their Charge, and be revenged

ged on them. It is frequently added in Scripture to the Charge of *Jeroboam*, as the utmoſt Aggravation of his Crime, that *he made Iſrael to ſin.* He was not Guilty of a ſingle Apoſtacy, but drew the whole Nation into Idolatry by his Power and Example. Vol. 2.

We need look no farther, than the Hiſtory of that and other Kings of the Jews, to be convinced of the influence of a great Example. For as often as thoſe introduced Idolatry, or reſtored true Religion, ſo often did the generality of the People fall into Apoſtacy, or return to the worſhip of the true God. The Reward of thoſe pious Princes will receive infinite increaſe from the bleſſed Effects of their Example; and the Damnation of the others will be heightened, from the infection communicated to others by their wickedneſs.

And what Princes are in relation to their Subjects in this matter, the ſame are all Superiors in relation to their Inferiors, whether in Authority, Riches, or Knowledge. The Piety of a Maſter reformeth, or his Diſſoluteneſs corrupteth a whole Family. The Exemplarineſs of a rich Man inſtruct-

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Vol. 2. eth, or his wickedneſs debaucheth all his poorer Dependants. The religious Conduct of a knowing Man corrects, or his unwary Behaviour perverts all his Admirers. And all ſuch ſhall certainly receive the reward of the good Effects of their exemplary Piety; or if their Conduct be contrary, the Puniſhment of their private Sins will be much ſharpened in Conſideration of the unhappy influence, which their Actions had to diſpoſe other Men to ſin.

The Duty of Exemplarineſs, and the excellent Deſign our Lord in requiring it of his Followers, being thus cleared, I paſs to the Second Head, to conſider the manner, which he hath fixed, whereby to raiſe this Example, that is, *by good Works: Let your Light ſo ſhine before Men, that they may ſee your good Works.* None but theſe will have any influence upon the Minds of thoſe, who are without the Church, or who judge rightly: And none but theſe will avail ſuch as are within the Chuch, or make little uſe of their Judgment.

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To become a light and a glorious Example in the World, it is neceſſary to be eminent in thoſe Actions, which are acknowledged by the World to be good, excellent, and of intrinſick worth. Such are all Actions of Moral Vertues, but more eſpecially ſuch as are poſitive, as Juſtice, Truth, Zeal for the Honour of God, Kindneſs and Charity to Men. Such are in many places of the New Teſtament, and in common Speech alſo, called *good Works*; which whoſoever doth illuſtriouſly perform, all other Men, although of a different or no Religion, will bear him Witneſs, that the Lawgiver, whoſe Precepts he therein obeyeth, is good and juſt; that his Example deſerveth Praiſe and Imitation. Vol. 2.

And what Effect muſt we not believe, this Example had upon the Jews and Heathens, before the brightneſs of it was obſcured by the prevailing wickedneſs of latter Ages? When the Church could challenge her Adverſaries to produce from among her Followers an unclean or an injuſt, an intemperate or a prophane Perſon; when their Piety was ſo undeniable in the conſtant

Vol. 2. conſtant frequenting of the publick Prayers and Sacraments of the Church, even in the midſt of Perſecutions: When their Charity appeared ſo conſpicuous, not only in relation to their own Members, but now even to their Enemies, in feeding the Hungry, in clothing the naked, in redeeming Captives, in communicating to all: When an Heathen Governour, and he the moſt Learned Man of his Age, employed by his Emperor to examine the Doctrine and Conduct of the Chriſtians, made this report to him; *That they were a ſort of Men, who injured no Man, defrauded none, abſtained from Murder, Luſt and Perjury, gave frequent Demonſtrations of admirable Charity; and meeting once every Week in the publick Service of God, bound themſelves by religious Ties and Sacraments to do all this.* When a Learned Adverſary after a full Search could make no other report than this; what remained, but to conclude that God was indeed among them? So wiſely Chriſtianity contrived to draw in unbelieving, but unprejudiced Spectators, by the Beauty of its Example: The force of which none could withſtand, while

while its greateſt Adverſaries dared not to deny that the Exerciſe of good Works, was the Primitive Religion of the World; and if not the Duty, yet at leaſt the Intereſt and the Ornament of Mankind. Vol. 2.

Our Lord propoſed not to form this Example by extreme Auſterities and Macerations, by Paradoxes in Doctrine or Practice, by Raptures or Extaſies; which might eaſily raiſe the Amazement, but not the Reverence of other Men. Judicious Men would eſteem them Follies, if propoſed as matters of intrinſick Excellence, and entertain them with Scorn: And even ignorant Perſons might be aſtoniſhed at them, yet could they never diſcover any real worth in them, or the Reaſon of them.

It is the unhappineſs of latter Ages, to have introduced ſuch groſs Conceptions, inſtead of what our Lord directed, the Practice of good Works; and thereby have in a great meaſure defeated thoſe excellent Ends, which he intended. Thus the Church of *Rome* in her latter Saints hath chiefly reſpected extravagant Auſterities, and the

Report

Vol. 2. Report of fooliſh Miracles: And ſome others have made the Indications or Signs of Saint-ſhip to be unaccountable Raptures, or internal pretended Conſolations, or union to God and Chriſt, which have no neceſſary external Effect, or cannot be diſcovered by unbelievers; or if diſcovered, would not affect them. With them no Example, but of ſuch Actions as are univerſally allowed to be Excellent, namely of *good Works*, will be of any Power; and therefore our moſt wiſe Saviour hath appointed no other: And if this be not continued, all other means of continuing the Glory of this Light, which our Lord propoſed, will be found wholly ineffectual.

And as to thoſe without, ſo alſo to thoſe within the Church, but needing the Direction of Example, no other will be of any advantage. The benefit in relation to them conſiſts in leading the way to ſuch, who are inclined to imitate the Actions of thoſe whom they admire or reſpect, or to whom they are ſubject; which Actions, if they be ſuch as are here required, *good Works*, the Deſign of our Lord

Lord is happily effected, the Duty of ſuch Perſons promoted, their Salvation ſecured, the Reward of thoſe, who give the Example increaſed. But if the Actions be of any other Nature; they are either unlawful or indifferent, not worthy Imitation, and without any Promiſe of reward. Vol. 2.

In the third Place our Lord in the Text propoſeth the end, towards which theſe exemplary *good Works* ſhould be directed; which is, that *others may ſee them, and glorifie your Father, which is in Heaven*, that is, in ſeeing them may glorifie God. Leaſt Men ſhould be betrayed into Pride or Arrogance, through an Opinion of their own good Works; they are commanded to refer all not to their own, but to the Divine Glory. Leaſt they ſhould ſwell with the Conceit of being a Light to the World, of giving a Rule to the Actions of other Men by their own Conduct; they are taught, that all this ought not to be employed to promote their own Eſteem in the World, but to advance the Honour and Worſhip of God. While good Works are indeed directed to this end, it is impoſſible,

Vol. 2. ble, that any thing of Pride ſhould intervene. And if notwithſtanding peeviſh and moroſe Men will detract from them, as done for ſiniſter Ends and vain Glory; our Lord hath provided for this a Remedy in the 11th. Verſe of this Chapter, immediately preceding this Exhortation to a good Example: *Bleſſed are you, when Men ſhall revile you, and ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſely for my ſake.*

Nothing indeed is more odious and diſtaſteful, than Oſtentation in Religion, or more to be avoided. This raiſed the Indignation of our Lord againſt the Phariſees, and ſtill exciteth the Scorn of all judicious Men, when Acts of Religion are formed on purpoſe to be ſeen by Men; when their Praiſe and Applauſe is thereby courted and ſtudiouſly contrived. But in this Duty of being exemplary in *good Works*, as there is no Command of contriving the ordinary performance of them in ſuch a manner, as may be moſt taken notice of by other Men; ſo there is for the moſt part no neceſſity of it in Order to their being obſerved by them.

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Many of them are of ſuch a Nature; as cannot but be obſerved, whether he who performs them intends it or not, they cannot be concealed or paſs unregarded. Upon which account Chriſt juſtly reſembleth them to *a City placed on a Hill*, and to *a Candle ſet on a Candleſtick*, in the 14th. and 15th. Verſes, which naturally appear and give Light to all round about them: as if he ſhould ſay: Do but you take care to perform *good Works*, and the very Nature of them will cauſe them to become Exemplar. I do not require you to publiſh and Blazon them abroad; nor is there any need of it: For if they be indeed performed, they cannot eſcape the Knowledge and Obſervation of other Men. Vol. 2.

Farther, not only the Nature of *good Works* maketh the Oſtentation of them to be unneceſſary in order to become Exemplar; but alſo they carry with them leſs Temptation to Pride and Arrogance, than any other Acts either of true or ſuppoſed Religion. If the grounds and more ordinary Reaſons of Pride and Self-conceit in Religion be ſearched;

Vol. 2. it will be found, that they are wont to be grounded in the more eaſie and commonly in miſtaken Points of Religion. As of old among the Phariſees, in the punctual performance of Waſhings and other Ritual Obſervations; among the more Ignorant of the Church of *Rome* at this day in Pilgrimages, Beads, and other Trifles; among their Saints in extraordinary Auſterities or unuſual Acts of Self-denial; among Enthuſiaſts in Raptures and pretended Inſpirations. All theſe naturally tend to foment the Pride and Self-conceit of Men; they draw the Eyes of others on them; and ſerve to make unwary People believe them extremely Conſcientious; and have this farther advantage towards the Deſign of Hypocrites, that they are cheaply performed, croſs no Paſſion, reſtrain no Luſt, make a great ſhew, and coſt them nothing. And when they are performed, not affording any inward Satisfaction of Mind, as having no internal worth; it is but natural for the Actors of them to ſeek that Satisfaction from the Praiſes and Applauſe of other Men, which they reaped not from the Reflections of their own Conſcience.

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Whereas the performance of *good Works* raiſeth in the Soul of Man ſo ſweet a Complacency, when reflected on, that external Commendations can add nothing conſiderable to the internal Satisfaction of the Mind, and will be neglected when compared with it. Vol. 2.

To which I may add, that the Exerciſe of many *good Works*, and moſt ſignally the greateſt of them, that of Charity towards the Poor, do naturally diſpoſe to Humility, accuſtoming the Mind to conſider and compaſſionate the Wants and Infirmities of inferior Perſons, and condeſcend to the relief of their Condition. It being moſt certain, that Pride or an over-valuing of their own Dignity, is in ſome Men the Cauſe of uncharitableneſs; as well as the love of Riches, betraying them to imagine it beneath their Quality to take into their Conſideration the neceſſities of diſtreſſed Perſons, and to be aggrieved for them. Which ſort of Pride cannot conſiſt with real Charity; and where this is to be found, the former can have no place. At leaſt it is moſt certain, that Hypocriſie may conſiſt with all thoſe miſtaken Indica-

Vol. 2. tions of Holineſs I before mentioned; but with *good Works*, with Mercy, Juſtice, Truth, and Charity, it is impoſſible it ſhould conſiſt. For that whoſoever performeth theſe, doth really perform what he pretends to do, that is, ſatisfieth the Obligation of the Religion which he profeſſeth.

However, although ordinarily it be not neceſſary ſo to direct the performance of *good Works*, that they may not eſcape the Knowledge of Men, and it be always unlawful to direct them in that manner for this end alone, to obtain the Praiſe of Men: Yet in ſome extraordinary Caſes, it is not only lawful to perform them publickly with this Deſign, that they may be ſeen of others, (not to obtain their Praiſe, but to promote the Honour and Glory of God;) but it is alſo highly acceptable to God, and ſerviceable to his Church. This is warranted by the expreſs words of our Lord in the Text, which require his Diſciples to cauſe their *Light ſo to ſhine before Men, that they may ſee their good Works and glorifie God.* If this Deſign doth at laſt terminate in the Honour of God, and be ſo intend-

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ed, it is not only warrantable, but recommendable by God, and will be certainly rewarded by him. Vol. 2.

Only great Caution is to be uſed in the Management of it, and a ſcrupulous Care to be obſerved, leaſt any thing of vain Glory, any ſiniſter End ſhould intervene; and is to be put in Practice only in Caſes of exceeding moment. Such are, when any Age or large Society of Men are eſpecially deficient in any Duty. In which Caſe, it is a laudable and noble Undertaking for any private Perſons, to give the greateſt and moſt publick Luſtre to their performance of that Duty, that ſo if it be poſſible, by their eminent Example therein they may retrieve the publick Practice of it; and whenſoever any great and common Good, altho' of another Nature, may be attained or promoted thereby.

Such was the Caſe more particularly of the Apoſtles, who were ſent to preach Faith and Repentance among Jews and Heathens, generally devoid not only of Faith, but of all Moral Vertues. For this Reaſon it was neceſſary, that thoſe noble Acts of

Vol. 2. Charity, which they exerciſed, in healing the Sick, and reſtoring the uſe of their Limbs and Senſes to thoſe who before wanted them, ſhould be performed publickly; that themſelves ſhould decline no opportunity of manifeſting the Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion, and the deep Impreſſion of it upon their own Minds. For this Cauſe alſo St. *Paul* was not aſhamed to relate at large, and to Glory in the many Afflictions, Hazards and Perſecutions which he had undergone for the Teſtimony of Chriſt; becauſe the amplifying of his Labour and Patience, tended to the ſpiritual Good of the *Corinthians*, to whom it is directed, and conſequently promoted the Honour of God. This Deſign alſo juſtified the Bravery of thoſe ancient Chriſtians, who voluntarily and unſought for, delivered up themſelves into the hands of their Perſecutors, when they obſerved a general Cowardize, and frequent Examples of Apoſtacy among other Chriſtians, who were apprehended and brought before the Heathen Tribunals: that ſo by their Courage and Conſtancy they might excite others to perſiſt reſolutely in the Profeſſion of their Faith.

It must be acknowledged, that simply to throw themselves into Danger, to expose themselves to the Fury of their Persecutors, was unlawful. Our Lord in *Matth.* X. 23. had commanded his Disciples, *When they should be persecuted in one City, to fly into another*: And the Doctrine and Discipline of the ancient Church had forbidden the ordinary Practice of such rash Undertakings. Yet whensoever so great a Good might be attained thereby, as to raise the dejected Courage of other Christians, and to assert the Honour of Christ against the Heathens, boasting in the subversion of many weaker Christians, it was not only lawful to engage in voluntary Martyrdom, but highly meritorious, and rewarded as such by God, if no vain Glory, or desire of humane Praise were intermixed therewith; but the sole Design was the Advancement and Vindication of the Divine Glory. Vol. 2.

For far be it from us to censure or condemn of Rashness all those noble ancient Martyrs, who without any Force confessed the Faith of Christ at the Heathen Tribunals, and thereby

Vol. 2. drew upon themſelves Torments and Death, that they might give an Example of Conſtancy to leſs couragious Chriſtians, who could not otherwiſe withſtand the force of Perſecution. It was found by Experience, that ſuch generous Examples did more effectually raiſe the Courage of other Chriſtians labouring under Perſecution, than the Senſe of their Duty, or the hope of all thoſe glorious Rewards propoſed by Chriſt, to thoſe who ſhould ſuffer for his Name. And to juſtifie this proceeding in ſuch extraordinary Caſes, St. *Paul* himſelf, as we read *Acts* XXI. had reſolved to go up to *Jeruſalem*, and continued his Reſolution; although it was foretold to him by *Agabus* and other Prophets, and himſelf knew by the Spirit, *that Bonds and Impriſonment did abide him*; that he ſhould there ſuffer a grievous Perſecution.

Nor is this the only Caſe, wherein it may be lawful or commendable to perform *good Works* publickly, and with this Deſign, that they may be ſeen of Men. Many other ſuch Caſes may be found. I will inſtance but in two, Penance and Charity. As for the

the firſt, the Practice of publick Pen- Vol. 2.
nance, it muſt be confeſſed by all, who know the State of the ancient and preſent times of Chriſtianity, that the uſe of it was then the great Preſerver of unfeigned Piety among Chriſtians, and that the Diſcontinuance of it now is the chief Cauſe of the want and coldneſs of Religion in our times. They very well knew formerly, as well as we do now, that God chiefly regardeth inward Repentance, the Contrition of the Soul. That Admonition of our Saviour was then, as well as now, contained in the Goſpel: *But thou, when thou faſteſt, anoint thy Head, and waſh thy Face, that thou appear not unto Men to faſt, but unto thy Father which is in Heaven*, where what is ſaid of Faſting, may be applied to all other Acts and Indications of Repentance: Yet the infinite Benefit, which the Church received from the publick performance of Pennance, required the Inſtitution, and the great Advancement of the Glory of God, which roſe from thence, juſtified the Practice of it.

Then was Religion and Piety maintained in its full Vigour, when Perſons guilty

Vol. 2. guilty of any ſcandalous Crimes, however eminent by Birth or Station, were put to open Penance, ſecluded from the reſt of the Faithful, placed by themſelves in a ſeparate part of the Church, and there appearing in Sackcloth, or other penitential Dreſs begged the Pardon of God with Tears, and deſired Reconciliation; and this not only for many days, but oftimes for many years together.

Such Diſcipline could not but produce in the Minds of all Chriſtians, who beheld it, an exceeding dread of Sin, and Caution, in abſtaining from ſuch Scandals, as would certainly draw upon them, either a total Separation from the Church, and the Hopes of Salvation, or the neceſſity of undergoing the ſame Severities. The ſight of thoſe Penitents was more inſtructive to ordinary Chriſtians, than all the moſt elaborate Invectives againſt Sin, or Exhortations to Repentance; repreſenting to them at once the Guilt, the Horror, the Shame, and the Puniſhment of Sin. Nor was their Repentance to be accounted leſs real or internal, becauſe attended with ſuch outward

ward Profeſſions: rather theſe gave an evident Argument of the reality and ſincerity of their Repentance; ſince to take away the Guilt and remove the Scandal of their Sin, and reconcile themſelves to God and his Church, they refuſed not to undergo the long and ſtrict Severities of publick Penance, and which of all things is moſt repugnant to the Inclinations of humane Nature, to put themſelves to open Shame. Vol. 2.

In like manner, however ordinarily ſpeaking, Charity ought to be done in ſecret; and our Lord hath largely warned us, *To take heed, leſt we do our Alms before Men, to be ſeen of them*; that is, for this only Reaſon, that we may be ſeen and praiſed by them; yet if we do our Alms before Men, that they may ſee them, and by ſeeing them may be excited either to glorifie God, or to practice the like Charity, then it is not only lawful, not only ſecureth the Rewards promiſed to Charity, but alſo becometh of excellent advantage to the Church, and the Honour of God, and entitleth to the Rewards due to the Propagation of Religion, and the Divine Glory.

How-

Vol. 2. However it might be in ancient Times or former Ages, when almoſt all Chriſtians exerciſed Charity even to profuſeneſs; certainly in our Age, which is chiefly deficient in the practice of this Duty, it would be a noble Undertaking in any to reſtore the Practice of it by the Luſtre of any eminent and publick Example. And although very great Rewards be promiſed to ſecret Charity; it is not to be doubted, but that to publick Charity exerciſed in ſuch Caſes much greater are reſerved, if it be not corrupted with any mixture of vain Glory, or ignoble Deſigns: becauſe ſuch hath not only all the Effects of ſecret Charity, in relieving the Wants of others, but, farther alſo, contributeth very much to the Honour of God, the common good of the Church, and the Edification of other Men.

In all theſe and other like Caſes, the advantage produced thereby to the Church, conſiſts not ſo much in exciting others by the force of Example, to the Imitation and Practice of the ſame *good Works*, although that be very great, as in the Conviction of the

the truth of Christianity, which it invincibly formeth in the Minds of Men. To Persons of ordinary Capacities and Knowledge, such as constitute the far greater part of the Church, there can be no more certain Argument of the Truth of that Religion which they profess, than that the same is professed by so great a number of eminent and excellent Persons. If they believe the Profession of others to be sincere and real, themselves will Assent without any Scruple: if they suspect their reality, themselves will be tempted to Infidelity. Vol. 2.

Now the publick and eminent performance of *good Works*, gave the only evident Demonstration of the sincerity of the perswasion of other Men; since in a Country where any Religion prevails by Custom and Education, a verbal Profession of it may be only the effect of either, and not to contradict it, may be due only to common Civility. But whoever publickly performeth *good Works*, giveth an undeniable Testimony, that he doth in earnest believe the Truth of what he professeth, and thereby disposing others to the same belief,

lief, increaſeth the number of the Faithful, and advanceth the Glory of God; performeth the Duty enjoyned in my Text, and ſhall receive the Reward of it.

Thus much of the End, to which exemplary Piety ought to be directed, *the Glory of God*; and that this End will really be obtained by it, I proceed in the laſt place to ſhew. The Honour of God is promoted by the Praiſes and by the Service of Men. The Praiſe of God is directly promoted by the *good Works* of his own Servants, while other Men viewing the Excellency of their Actions, raiſe their Thoughts to God the Fountain of them, and conceive ſomewhat yet greater and more excellent in him: Neceſſarily concluding, that if that imperfect Light, which may be diſcovered in the Soul of Man, be yet ſo glorious, the Perfection of the Divine Nature exceedeth all Imagination: That if ſuch eminent Acts of Goodneſs be performed by frail Men in Obedience to his Will; in him devoid of Frailty and Imperfection, the Fulneſs of all Goodneſs dwells: if the Actions of his Servants deſerve Love and Praiſe

Praiſe, much more will the Operations of him their Lord and Maſter proclaim him worthy of Honour and Adoration. Vol. 2.

But this manner of reflecting Honour upon God, from the *good works* of his faithful Servants, is not ſo much reſpected by our Lord in this place, as the Inſtruction and Converſion of other Men, who by the good Example of true Chriſtians may be brought to the knowledge of the Truth, to the love of Vertue, and to the practice of their Duty: to effect which, eminent Examples have no leſs force than Reaſon or Arguments. This giveth Authority to Vertue, and taketh off the Reproach of being ſingular. It relieveth the Modeſty of new Beginners; and encourageth to purſue their Courſe, ſo well begun, notwithſtanding the Scorn and Deriſion of prophane Men.

To tender and unexperienced Minds, there is no greater Obſtacle of Goodneſs, than the fear of being ſingular thereby. The natural impreſſions of Reaſon may incline to the Exerciſe of Vertue; but yet they have not the Courage to ſwim againſt the Stream, to oppoſe their ſingle Example to the prevailing

Vol. 2. ling Corruption of a ſinful World, nor bear up againſt the Contempt of wicked Men, without the Patronage and Aſſiſtance of other great and good Examples, whoſe practice they may plead in their own behalf; and that defence, which the weakneſs of their Judgment inableth them not to draw from Reaſon, they may draw from their Authority. Altho' not only weaker Minds, but even more ingenuous and underſtanding Perſons, while unexperienced in the World, are not able to ſhock the Power of a general Example. If they be convinced of their Duty, they yet want Boldneſs, to execute it; and dread nothing more than the Suſpicion of Affectation, or fear of appearing ſingular. Whence it is, that youth eſpecially ſuffers by ill Example; who through a natural Modeſty are ever wont to accommodate themſelves to the prevailing Faſhion.

Further, a good Example inſtructeth the more ignorant part of Mankind, both in the Rules and the Obligation of their Duty. Few are enabled, at leaſt few take the pains, to examine the Grounds of that Religion, into which

which they were baptized, to discover the Truth, and convince themselves of the Obligation of it. They rely herein upon the Judgment of others, whom they esteem wiser than themselves; whom they find to profess no Religion, or (which is all one) to Act as if they had none; they supercede the Labour of any further Enquiry, and dismiss all Resolutions of Goodness. Vol. 2.

On the contrary, if it be found by them, that wise Men, or so accounted, who by their Learning were fully enabled to discover the truth of things, to find out the Cheat of Religion, if it were indeed such, have after a diligent and accurate search been so fully convinced of the truth of it, that they have been content to hazard their Lives, to restrain their Pleasures, to deny their Passions, from the perswasion of it; if great and illustrious persons, who had opportunity of improving all the Pleasures of Life to the most exquisite satisfaction, yet moderated and limited them in Obedience to the Laws of Religion: To a vulgar Mind there can be no greater assurance than the experience of this; and if he finds this, he

there reſts ſatisfied; if not, he proceeds no farther. And from this experience alſo he draws the Rules of his Conduct, even after a general Conviction of his Obligation. In all doubtful Actions and Caſes of Conſcience he conſults the example of his Superiours; and purſueth the way, which they have marked out to him; following them, as he ſuppoſeth them to follow the true Light.

Nay to generous as well as vulgar Minds, example is an effectual Motive of Vertue. To ſuch, Emulation is the moſt powerful Argument, and a noble diſdain of being exceeded in any thing that is Excellent and Praiſe-worthy. To them the preference of any other is a reproach of their own Sloth; and when others have gone before with Reward and Praiſe, it is uneaſie to ſtay behind. It was this Principle of generoſity, which kept up Vertue among the Heathens; it is this which gave riſe and increaſe to Arts and Sciences, and which now maintaineth Valour. Our Lord hath improved the uſe of it, and directed it to a yet more noble End; propoſing the Excellency and the Rewards of Obedience, holding out the

the Crown of Victory, and encouraging us to ſtrive for the Maſtery. Vol. 2.

He hath in this Precept concerning Exemplarineſs, given to us a yet further Scope for the Exerciſe of Generoſity; not only propoſing Rewards to the Conquerors, to thoſe of a more elevated Vertue, but alſo to ſuch, who excited by their illuſtrious Example, ſhould follow them, altho' at a diſtance, making them thereby the Inſtruments of ſaving others, and that poſſibly in great numbers. At leaſt there is ſcarce any one of us ſo inconſiderable, who may not have ſo much Influence and Authority upon ſome one or other, as to move and direct him by his Example; which if he doth, he will for ever enjoy this ſatisfaction, that he hath been the occaſion of infinite Happineſs to another: which to a good and a generous Mind, is a ſtrong Argument of the purſuit and practice of thoſe Vertues and Perfections, which may make him Exemplary, that ſo he may promote the Reformation of the World, and the eternal Happineſs of other Men.

It may ſeem indeed paſt hope, that in this degenerate Age, when ſo few endeavour to obtain their own Salva-

tion, or are good for their own ſake any ſhould attempt it for the ſake of other Men. Yet I do not deſpair, that there are yet ſuch generous Minds left in the World, who eſteem it no ſmall Felicity to themſelves to promote the good of other Men; and acting upon this perſwaſion, ſtudy to be good and excellent, that by their Example others may be drawn to the ſame Practice, and thereby ſecure to themſelves a ſtate of Happineſs.

To ſuch exemplary Perſons frequent Praiſe is given, and eminent Rewards promiſed, more particularly in *Daniel*, XII. *They that be wiſe, ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the Firmament; and they that turn many to Righteouſneſs, as the Stars for ever and ever.*

The Luſtre of our Lord's Example is compared to the brightneſs of the Sun, the Example of wiſe and holy Men to the fixed Stars, which however far inferior to the Glory of the Sun, yet are ſeated in Heaven, and communicate to the Earth; a Light never to be extinguiſhed, and that at a great diſtance. The nearer we approach to theſe luminous Bodies, the greater Light we ſhall receive from them.

The

The Examples of holy Men while alive are ſo many ſhining and burning Lights in their ſeveral Generations; and even after their Deaths will derive exceeding influence to ſucceeding Ages, ſo long as the Memory of their eminent Piety and good Works ſhall be continued. Thoſe excellent Graces, wherewith they were endued, thoſe noble Teſtimonies of Vertue and Holineſs, which they gave, tended no leſs to the benefit of the whole Church, and the inſtruction of other Chriſtians, than to their own Salvation, and if they be not equally beneficial to us at this diſtance of time, it is becauſe we either take no Care to obtain the knowledge of them, or ſuffer the remembrance of them to ſlip out of our Minds. Vol. 2.

It is undeniable indeed, that in this preſent Age, and among us eſpecially, the Memory of theſe things is almoſt loſt, which is not the leaſt cauſe of the prevailing wickedneſs of the Age; and preſent Examples of equal Luſtre are very rare, or indeed ſcarce any: yet for all that, thoſe Holy Perſons ceaſe not to retain their glorious Seat in Heaven, and there as the Prophet ſaith, *To ſhine as the brightneſs of the Firmament*, as the

Vol. 2. fixed Stars always maintain their Stations, and preſerve their Light, altho' at any time not ſeen by us. To this glorious Station in Heaven our Lord hath promiſed to advance all thoſe, who by extraordinary Piety and the eminent Exerciſe of *good Works*, ſhall endeavour not only to ſave their own Souls, but alſo to Profit the Church in general, and to promote the Salvation of any other in particular.

May the hope of this glorious Reward excite every one of you to the performance of this Duty of Exemplarineſs; *And may God of his infinite Mercy accept and Crown your Endeavours, for the ſake and Merits of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, to whom* &c.

The

The One and Twentieth Sermon

Preach'd on *Decemb.* 25*th.*

1690.

At LAMBETH CHAPEL.

Luk. II. 14.

Glory to God in the higheſt, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.

WHAT the Patriarchs ſaw afar off and deſired, what the Prophets foretold, and juſt Men in all preceding Ages did aſſuredly expect, the Manifeſtation of God in the Fleſh, and the Salvation of Mankind to be wrought thereby, did *this Day* receive its Final accompliſhment by the Birth of our Lord and Saviour; the Commemoration of which is the occaſion of this *preſent Solemnity.*

Nor can we more fitly commemorate it, than by this admirable Hymn, which the Angels and heavenly Hoſt

Vol. 2. upon this occaſion ſang before us; and the Church hath in all Ages ſince retained in her moſt Sacred Offices, *Glory be to God in the higheſt, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.*

This Hymn ſeems to have been a part of the publick Service of the Jews, and to have been employed by them, to expreſs and celebrate the moſt illuſtrious Inſtances of the Divine Goodneſs to them. For we find Acclamations very like to it in ſeveral places of Scripture; and particularly upon the triumphant Entry of Chriſt, into *Jeruſalem*. The Jews being perſwaded, that their long-looked for Meſſias was now come, and all the temporal Advantages which they fancied would attend his Coming, cryed out, *Peace in Heaven, and Glory in the higheſt.* But ſurely upon no occaſion was it ever ſo juſtly uſed, as by the Angels upon this *Day*, in which the Divine Glory did ſo eminently ſhine forth, and the eternal Happineſs of Mankind did commence.

For from the Angels we receive this Hymn, and are taught to ſing it by their Example; which is related in the Verſe preceding the Text: *And ſuddenly there was with the Angels a multitude of the Heavenly Hoſt, praiſing God and*

and ſaying, &c. One Angel declared to the Shepherds the *glad Tidings of great joy which ſhould be to all People*, the Birth of Chriſt: but the whole Quire of Angels, the Hoſt of Heaven joyned to ſing Praiſe to God, and celebrate thoſe Benefits which were that day derived down upon all Mankind. Themſelves received not like Benefits to men from the Incarnation of the Son of God; yet returned Glory to God for it. The Reaſons of which it may not be amiſs to lay down, before I proceed to conſider the parts of this Hymn ſingly.

Firſt then, the Angels were moved to give Thanks to God by the increaſe of the Divine Glory among Men, which they foreſaw would be conſequent to this Incarnation. Their Office is to attend continually before the Throne of God, and ſing Praiſes without Intermiſſion to him; ſo that every new increaſe of the Divine Glory inflames their Zeal in this Holy Office. The primary reaſons indeed of that Glory and Praiſe which they continually yield to God, are eternal, being drawn from his immutable Attributes of ſupreme Power, Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Majeſty: Yet every illuſtrious Manifeſtation of any of theſe glorious Attributes

by

by external Effects, becometh alſo the Subject of their Praiſe. Thus in *Revel.* IV. 8. we find the Angels celebrating the eternal Attributes of God in that Hymn, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come:* And in many other places celebrating the Effects of theſe Attributes, as Rev. XV. 3. *Great and marvellous are thy Works Lord God Almighty*, and XIX. 7. *Let us be glad and rejoyce, and give Honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come.*

Nay as it ſhould ſeem, by comparing the ſeveral forms of Doxology to be found in the Book of *Revelations*, the Angels, ſince the Manifeſtation of the Myſtery of God incarnate, have in a manner changed the Subject of their Doxologies, and confined themſelves almoſt wholly to the Contemplation of this Myſtery, and the glorious Effects of it. For in the beginning of that Book, while the ſecrets of Heaven are ſtill ſuppoſed to be Sealed up, the wonderful Effects of this Myſtery not yet to be fully diſcloſed, all their Doxologies inſiſt upon the general Attributes of the Divine Nature. But after the full Declaration and Completion of thoſe glorious Events and Effects of this

this Myſtery, which are there deſcribed, Vol. 2.
the Argument of the heavenly Hymns
is altered, and imployed in the celebrating the Victories of the Lamb, the overthrow of Satan, and the Happineſs of the Kingdom of the Meſſias. That is, ſo eminent and admirable is the Myſtery of *this Day*, ſo much conducing to the Divine Glory, that ſince the Completion of it, it is become the chief Subject of the Contemplation of thoſe Holy Spirits; who hereby beſt of all diſcern, and are enabled to celebrate that Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs, which they before admired in God.

Farther, the Angels celebrated the Birth of Chriſt, as rejoycing at the Salvation of Men which was to be procured thereby. Thoſe excellent Spirits are inclined by their own Goodneſs and Benignity to wiſh well to their Fellow-creatures, to be concerned at their welfare, and rejoyce in it: Eſpecially for thoſe who are endued, if not with equal, yet with like Reaſon, who poſſeſs Souls of the ſame ſpiritual Nature, and alike immortal. By theſe, if by any means, the number of the Heavenly Hoſt, formerly diminiſhed by the fall of *Lucifer* and his Aſſociates, was to be repaired: All which would

would not permit them to be unconcerned in the Felicity of Mankind; and that, although the Divine Diſpoſition had not obliged them to have a peculiar regard of it. But when by the Order of God, *They are all miniſtring Spirits, ſent forth to miniſter for them, who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation*, as we read, *Hebr.* I. 14. there was abundant Reaſon for this their Exultation; ſince without the Incarnation of Chriſt, their Labour had been wholly vain, and the condition of Man not capable of relief. But after they ſaw this, at once made both poſſible and eaſie, in a Rapture of Joy they broke forth into this Hymn of Praiſe. For if *there be joy among the Angels of Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth* and is ſaved: How much more when the whole Maſs of Mankind was redeemed and made capable of Salvation?

Even the Angels themſelves, altho' not in the ſame Degree with Mankind, received ſignal Benefits from the Manifeſtation of this Myſtery: And therefore had reaſon to rejoyce upon the Completion of it. Their Happineſs conſiſts in contemplating and praiſing the Nature, the Attributes, and the Effects of God. Their knowledge of all

all theſe things is Finite, as is their Nature; and therefore every addition of Knowledge is an encreaſe of Happineſs: and the Manifeſtation of this great Myſtery of Heaven was the greateſt Benefit, which in their State they could receive. Vol. 2.

Of the Myſteries of the Goſpel, St. *Peter* ſaith, 1 *Pet.* I. 12. that *the Angels deſired to look into them*; and that before this they were ignorant of it, appears from thoſe words of Chriſt, *Matth.* XXIV. 36. *But of that day, and hour knoweth no Man,, no not the Angels of Heaven, but my Father only.* When therefore the Son of God took Fleſh upon him, and thereby began to Complete the wonderful Myſtery of Man's Salvation: Then clearly appeared to theſe Bleſſed Spirits, what was before obſcure to them, the Reaſons of the Divine Conduct, in relation to Man in all preceding Ages; the Myſterious Secrets of his Providence; the Signification of Propheſies which went before; the purport of the Divine Decrees concerning the future State of other rational Beings. This new Knowledge adminiſtred to them freſh Reaſons, of admiring the Goodneſs and the Wiſdom of God, and thereby increaſed their Happineſs.

Thus

Thus we find the Angels moved by great Reaſons to joyn in the Solemnity of *this Day*. But why they choſe to do it audibly, ſo as to be heard of the Shepherds, as St. *Luke* relateth, we are ſtill to enquire. That Angel, which was peculiarly deſigned to this Office, had newly finiſhed his Meſſage of the Birth of Chriſt, and that Happineſs, which would thence enſue to all Mankind: when immediately *a multitude of the heavenly Hoſt* was preſent with him, and ſang this Hymn. This without doubt was to convince thoſe who heard it, and others who ſhould know by their Relation, of the Greatneſs and importance of the Meſſage; of the Excellency of the Benefits to be derived to the World from the Incarnation of Chriſt; of the Dignity of his Perſon, whoſe Birth was celebrated by the whole Hoſt of Heaven, that he could be no other than the Son of God, on whom the Angels ſo attended.

We find not that the entrance of any Prophet was uſhered in by the Miniſtry of Angels: On the other ſide, we read not of the immediate Preſence of God on Earth, as on *Mount Sina* to *Moſes*, on *Mount Horeb* to *Elias*; but it was ſtill attended with ſome other viſible

ſible Sign; as in both thoſe places by extraordinary Commotions in the Air, which alſo repreſented the ſeverity of the old Law: And in this Myſtery of the Incarnation of our Lord, by which God deſcended upon Earth, *was made Fleſh, and dwelt among us*, we find it foretold by one Angel, proclaimed by another, and celebrated by the whole Hoſt of Heaven. This declared his Majeſty, and was an evident Proof of the Divinity, if not of his Perſon, yet at leaſt of his Miſſion. Vol. 2.

Now leaſt we ſhould imagine our ſelves unconcerned in the Reaſons of the Angels praiſing God upon this occaſion, and make no uſe of what hath been hitherto ſaid: I will ſhew that all thoſe Reaſons, which might induce the Angels to break forth into this Hymn of Praiſe, are common to Men, and ought to be much more perſwaſive to them.

If the Angels were affected with the increaſe of Divine Glory wrought hereby: And are not we obliged to magnifie the glorious Attributes of God, and the ſeveral Emanations of them, both as we are his Creatures, and as we are endued with rational Souls? If the Angels ſo far rejoyced in the Benefit and Salvation of others; how much doth

doth it become us to be thankful, who reap the advantage, upon whom the Benefit is beſtowed? If the Angels were glad to ſee the Salvation of Mankind accompliſhed; much more ſurely ſhould Men eſteem themſelves obliged who enjoy it. So that upon all Accounts, if the Angels had Reaſon, Men have much more, to celebrate the Incarnation of Chriſt with this Hymn, *Glory to God in the Higheſt, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.* I will conſider the ſeveral parts of this Hymn ſingly. And firſt,

Glory to God in the Higheſt, which is not ſo much a deſire of what hath not, as an Approbation of what hath happened towards the Exaltation of the Divine Glory. The addition of *in the Higheſt*, ſignifieth either *in Heaven*, and ſo is oppoſed to what followeth, *Peace on Earth*, being a Completion of thoſe Propheſies of *Iſaiah, ſing O Heaven, and rejoyce O Earth, for the Lord hath redeemed* Jacob, *&c.* or more naturally it is to be rendred, *Glory to God in the higheſt degree*; in which Senſe this Phraſe is moſt frequently underſtood in Scripture, as in *Pſal.* XCIII. 4. where the ſame Phraſe is uſed in the Septuagint, *The Lord is mighty in the Higheſt*,

Higheſt, that is, mighty above all. And ſurely with great Reaſon we are directed to give the higheſt Glory to God which can be conceived, by reaſon of the Incarnation of his Son, wherein the Perfection of his eternal Attributes, is more conſpicuous than in any other effect whatſoever; and from whence he received the greateſt Glory, which was ever paid by Mankind to God. Vol. 2.

To purſue this in particular Conſiderations. The Love of God towards Mankind did never appear ſo eminently as in the completion of this Myſtery. Truly did St. *John* ſay, 1 *Joh.* IV. 9. *In this was manifeſted the love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only begotten Son into the World.* He had before employed ſufficient means of procuring univerſal Happineſs to Mankind. He had given to Man in his firſt Creation a diſtinct Knowledge of Good and Evil; left to him indeed the Liberty of Choice, but deterred him from the Choice of Evil, as well by the Dictates of his own Conſcience, as by the Denunciation of extreme Puniſhment which ſhould attend it. When notwithſtanding all this, Man embraced the Evil, God in his abundant Mercy provided an Expiation for this ſin, which in after Ages ſhould be ac-

Vol. 2. compliſhed by the Incarnation of his own Son. Upon this he pardoned the ſin of Man, received him to Mercy, and made him capable of eternal Happineſs. That this intended Happineſs might not be fruſtrated by the diſobedience of Men, he allured them by Promiſes, directed them by his Laws, taught them by his Prophets, and ſupported their Faith by the Expectation of a Meſſias or a Saviour to come.

So that upon the Incarnation of Chriſt is founded, not only the Mercy, the Grace and Bounty of God to the Chriſtian Church, but alſo all Acts of Goodneſs and Favour vouchſafed to Mankind ſince the fall of *Adam*. All theſe were conferred for the ſake of him, who in time ſhould take humane Nature upon him, and therein make full ſatisfaction for the Sins of Men.

The Benefit indeed was from the beginning of the World, but then the Divine Glory became chiefly manifeſt, when this Myſtery was fulfilled, when the Son of God was manifeſted in the Fleſh. Before, it lay hid in the ſecret Purpoſes of God, but was now declared to the whole World. Before, the Divine Glory which ſhould hence ariſe, was darkly foretold in Types and Propheſies,

pheſies, but now ſet in a full Light. Now were all ſubſequent Ages obliged to magnifie God, for the accompliſhment of that Myſtery in due time, which had ſo long been the Hopes of preceding Ages, and was the Happineſs of both. Vol. 2.

Further, the Wiſdom of God in contriving and effecting the Incarnation of his Son was moſt illuſtrious. If Wiſdom be taken for Excellency of Knowledge, what greater Argument can be deſired of the Divine Wiſdom, than that it foreſaw this great Event ſo long before; foretold it, and all the Circumſtances of it in the ſame manner as they were effected? Or if Wiſdom, which is the truer Notion of it, be underſtood to be the prudent direction of means to obtain any end propoſed; we can no longer doubt of the perfection of the Divine Wiſdom, when we conſider the Bleſſing of *this Day*.

When Mankind had committed that foul Apoſtacy in their Fore-father *Adam*, when ſucceeding Generations were found no leſs Rebellious, the Laws of God violated, and his Exhortations ſlighted; what ſeeming hope of Salvation could remain to Man? To have pardoned all theſe Sins ſimply, and without any Condition was indeed poſſible to God, but neither conſiſtent

Vol. 2. with his Honour nor his Juſtice. He was Lord and Judge of the whole Creation, and as ſuch could not paſs by the Sins of Men without inflicting any Puniſhment upon them. He had threatned to puniſh them; and then his Veracity obliged him to do it.

Again, the Sins of Men were of ſuch Guilt, as could not be expiated by a ſlight Puniſhment, being offences againſt an infinite Majeſty, who called for proportionable Puniſhment on the Offenders. If they were indeed inflicted; the whole Maſs of Mankind, inaſmuch as all had ſinned, was for ever miſerable. If they were not inflicted, the Denunciations of Puniſhment made by God would appear vain, his Office of Judge muſt be diſowned, and his Juſtice called in Queſtion. In this ſeeming impoſſibility of reconciling the Salvation of Man to the Juſtice of God; the Divine Wiſdom, decreed to effect it by ſending the ever Bleſſed Jeſus into the World, who being partaker of the Divine Nature, ſhould take humane Fleſh upon him, and in that undergo the Puniſhment due to the Sins of Men. This Myſtery after many Ages, was *this Day* made manifeſt, and therewith the ſupreme Perfection of the Divine Wiſdom.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, The Power of God did never receive a more evident Demonſtration, and that in effecting all thoſe Circumſtances, which were long before foretold, concerning the Birth of Chriſt. Theſe Circumſtances having been ſo often repeated by the Prophets to the Jews, and ſo much enquired after by them (as nearly concerning them) were ſo fully known to them, ſo earneſtly expected by them; that the completion of them muſt of neceſſity become the cleareſt and the ſtrongeſt Argument of the Divine Power, which ever was exhibited. Vol. 2.

As firſt, That the Meſſias ſhould be Born of a pure Virgin, a Circumſtance which ſhould effectually declare both the Dignity of the Perſon to be Born, and the Power of him, who ſhould produce it: Which ſhould never be conferred upon any other Member of Mankind, and could be effected by no other than the Author, and the Lord of Nature; who at firſt formed all things out of nothing, and ever after directed them as himſelf pleaſed. That the Mother of our Lord was indeed a Virgin, could not ordinarily appear to the Jews: Yet this they were fully aſſured of by the Prophets, that the Meſſias ſhould be born of a Virgin. And

Vol. 2. that the Propheſie took place in Jeſus, God provided abundant Arguments to convince them, as the Apparition and the Teſtimony of Angels; the Miracles afterwards enſuing to the Affirmation of his Diſciples; the Teſtimony of *Joſeph* accounted by all a good and a juſt Man; and he aſſured ſo by a Meſſage from Heaven.

As to the Circumſtance of place, it was foretold that Chriſt ſhould be born in *Bethlehem*. To effect this, the Divine Power directed the Mind of *Auguſtus Cæſar* to command an univerſal Tax, at that very time, (a thing before not known in the Roman Empire) that ſo the Mother of Chriſt, going from *Nazareth* where ſhe dwelt, to *Bethlehem*, the place whither the Deſcendants of *David* reſorted to be Taxed, might be delivered of her Son in the place long ſince foretold.

As for the time, *Jacob* moved by the Holy Ghoſt, had Propheſied, That *when the Scepter ſhould fail from Judah, then ſhould Shiloh* or Meſſias come. And at this time the Divine Providence ſo ordered, that *Herod* had obtained the Kingdom, who was the firſt that being not a Jew obtained that Government. *Daniel* had foretold, that after ſeventy Weeks of Years, that is ſeventy times ſeven Years,

Meſſias

Meſſias ſhould be cut off for the ſins of the people: And exactly thirty three Years before the Expiration of this time our Lord was born, who is known to have ſuffered in the thirty third Year of his Age. Vol. 2.

All theſe Completions of ancient Propheſies concerning the Meſſias in the Perſon of Jeſus, are ſo many infallible Proofs of the Almighty Power of God; who can diſpoſe of Times and Seaſons, of the Hearts of Men, and the Kingdoms of the World, and can aſſuredly bring to paſs whatſoever himſelf propoſeth. The Conſideration of this Almighty Power contributes greatly to the Divine Glory; when all the Signs and Tokens which God had given to Mankind to diſcover his Power thereby, in the Accompliſhment of this Myſtery are come to paſs.

But not only is it juſt and reaſonable, that from the Conſideration of the Incarnation of Chriſt, Glory ſhould be given to God; but alſo this effect hath actually been produced, and greater Glory hath thence enſued, than from all other Cauſes whatſoever. I will not inſiſt upon the Praiſe which the ancient Patriarchs, Prophets, and good Men gave to God when they foreſaw

Vol. 2. this Incarnation, altho' it all ought to be resolved into this Cause. I will only alledge the increase of Divine Glory subsequent to the Birth of Christ: And do that, by comparing the State of the World at that time, with that which followed to it.

Before this *Sun of Righteousness arose*, an universal darkness had overspread the face of the Earth. The worship of Idols and Devils had in every place prevailed. The true God so far from being honoured, that he was not so much as known. No Praises, Honour or Glory given to him, but his Laws violated without Remorse, his Authority not acknowledged, and his Benefits wholly forgot. Indeed the small Country of *Judea* is to be excepted; altho' that was now possessed by a Pagan Government, and was shortly to be wholly destroyed by them. And even of this small part of Mankind an inconsiderable Proportion maintained their Obedience to God entire. Their Teachers had made void the Commandments of God by their Traditions: The most Sacred Offices of their Religion were slighted and publickly set to Sale; and what remained of true Piety, just then expiring.

Consider now the State of the World in after times. We find this Darkness dispelled

diſpelled; this impiety removed, Armies of Saints, Martyrs and devout Perſons, who ſhould for ever continue to ſing that Hymn to God, which the Hoſt of Heaven began upon *this day*. The knowledge of the true God was introduced in all parts of the World; vaſt numbers of Perſons profeſſing the Worſhip of him converted in a few Years; their number daily increaſed, until after three hundred Years the whole civilized World did in a manner embrace the Chriſtian Faith, and joyn in offering up Praiſe to God, in magnifying his glorious Attributes, in confeſſing his Authority, in adoring his Majeſty, in obeying his Laws, if not in reality, yet at leaſt in Profeſſion. Vol. 2.

Theſe bleſſed Times indeed were not for ever to continue; it was foretold, That *in the latter times Men*, and that the greateſt number, *ſhould depart from the* true *Faith, walking after their own Luſts*. And the effect of this Propheſie the Church hath now for many Ages lamented. Yet after all, the publick Worſhip of the true God is ſtill kept up, if not in the greater, yet in the more underſtanding part of the World; vaſt numbers of devout Perſons yet remain; continual Praiſe is daily

Vol. 2. daily offered up to God; and all this is owing to the happy Incarnation of our Lord *as upon this day*. And to acknowledge this, and give Glory to God for it, we are *this day* met together, and so are all other true Members of the Catholick Church, in their several places.

The second Branch of the Angelick Hymn in the Text, is *Peace on Earth*. By *Peace* according to the usual Expression of the Jews, we may well understand all manner of Happiness, of which Mankind is capable, to be inferred; yet in considering it, I shall confine my self to the strict Acception of it. *This day* then were signally accomplished the ancient Prophesies concerning the peaceable Times of the Messias. Now was God reconciled to Mankind, and those Reasons founded, upon which Men should for ever be reconciled one to another. This was the greatest Benefit, which Men could possibly receive, to be restored to the favour of their Creator, and the Love of one another. God could receive no other from the Incarnation of his Son, but the increase of Glory; and Man no greater than the Gift of *Peace*; justly therefore, after *Glory to God in the highest*, the Angels subjoyn, *Peace on Earth*.

Peace

Peace in the first Sense, as it is Reconciliation to God, was foretold by *Isaias* of the times of the Messias, LVII. 19. And that to be granted to all Men who should accept the Condition of it. *Peace, Peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord: And I will heal them.* This Reconciliation was actually begun in the Incarnation of our Lord, and finally compleated by his Preaching and Suffering here on Earth; upon which Account he is called *the Prince of Peace.* And we are said, *Rom.* V. 1. To *have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Before, Men had by their Sins proclaimed themselves Enemies to God, and more eminently by putting themselves under the Dominion of the grand Enemy of God, the Devil, and the protection of evil Spirits; which was notoriously done among the Heathens. Christ by taking our Flesh upon him, and doing and suffering what afterwards he did, brought a great part of Mankind, to the acknowledgment and subjection of the true God; and having done so, offering up his Life as a Ransom for their Sins, obtained of his Father to be reconciled to them. Vol. 2.

In the Second Sense, *Peace upon Earth* signifieth the mutual *Peace* of Men.

This

Vol. 2. This alſo was foretold by the Prophets, concerning the times of the Meſſias, particularly by *Iſaiah*, in XI. and LX. Chapters, under the Repreſentation of that peaceable Temper which ſhould then be viſible even in Beaſts of Prey. It cannot be denied, that the Principles of Chriſtianity do ſtrangely incline Men to the Obſervation of this excellent temper of Mind; that if the Precepts of our Lord were indeed univerſally regarded, Hatred, Malice and Revenge would neceſſarily vaniſh out of the World.

And if Experience doth not juſtifie this, it is to be aſcribed to the Perverſeneſs of Men, not to the defect of the Chriſtian Laws. Our Lord reconciled all Men to God, yet ſo as that he left ſeveral Conditions to be performed by Man in order to it; which if he neglects, he will receive no benefit by the Incarnation of Chriſt, and be puniſhed as an Enemy of God. In like manner Chriſt hath ſettled *Peace on Earth*, yet not forced the Will of Man to obſerve it, but hath given ſuch Rules and Precepts, as if obſerved, cannot but produce an univerſal *Peace*. And ſo the ancient Propheſies are to be underſtood, not of the effect but of the Tendency of the Religion of the Meſſias; altho' it

it cannot be denied, that in a great measure they actually were accompliſhed, and to have taken place whereever the true Spirit of Chriſtianity was retained. Vol. 2.

Our Lord was born in the moſt warlike Empire, that ever the World ſaw; which in more than ſeven hundred Years had enjoyed no more than two years *Peace*. Yet at the time of his Birth the Wiſdom of God directed that an univerſal *Peace* ſhould then obtain, as well to typifie the Peaceableneſs of his Doctrine and Goſpel, as to facilitate the Propagation of it. Afterwards for ſeveral Ages the peaceable Principles of the Goſpel ſeldom wanted their effect in private Chriſtians: And even wrought ſo far in publick Societies profeſſing Chriſtianity, that for more than five hundred years after Chriſt, it is certain that Chriſtians never warred againſt others of the ſame Communion. Nor is the bleſſed Effect of it wholly expired in theſe degenerate times. Witneſs that great number of Chriſtians, which ſtill frequent the Holy Sacrament; of whom it is charitably to be ſuppoſed, that none preſumes to approach this holy Table, without an entire Reſolution of forgiving Injuries, and maintaining *Peace* with all Men.

The laſt part of the Angels Doxology,

Vol. 2. logy, is *Good-will towards Men*: Which expreſſeth much more than Reconciliation of God to Man; implying no leſs than his favour and kindneſs to them: Uſing the very ſame word in the Original, which God did of his Son, when he ſaid of him, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed.*

The Incarnation of Chriſt, and therein the Aſſumption of the humane to the Divine Nature, ſo far propitiated God in regard to Men, that he not only forgave their Sins, and was reconciled to them, but alſo admitted them to his Favour, made them capable of even preter-natural Happineſs, even of enjoying himſelf in Heaven. Inſomuch that he who had once thro' abhorrence of their Sins repented himſelf that he had made them, and reſolved that his Spirit ſhould not always ſtrive with them, did now adopt them for the Darlings of his Creation, and as the Original word in the Text implieth, even took Pleaſure in them: Vouchſafed to Honour theirs by joyning it to the Divine Nature in the Perſon of his Son, and therein raiſed it to a degree even above that of Angels; not only admitting them to that Pardon of paſt Sins which was never vouchſafed to the Angels, but alſo

ſending

ſending the Prince of Angels, and the Lord of Glory, to take human Fleſh upon him, who afterwards aſcending with it into Heaven, ſhould thereby conſecrate the whole Maſs of Mankind, of which his Body was the firſt Fruits, and thereby make it capable of the ſame Glory. Vol. 2.

And ſurely no greater Argument of the *Good will* of God *towards Men*, or of his delight in Mankind, could be deſired, than to raiſe them to the Society of himſelf in Heaven. This was the Effect of the delight which he teſtified to take in his beloved Son, the utmoſt Reward of his obedience, that he advanced his Human Nature to his own right hand in Heaven (for his Divine Nature was placed there from all Ages) and for his Sake admitted all thoſe, who ſhould imitate his Life and Obedience, to the ſame Glory. The poſſeſſion of Heaven, wherewith the Human Body of Chriſt is now inveſted, is an Argument that our Nature is capable of it, and an Earneſt that we ſhall in due time be raiſed to the ſame Honour: *For Chriſt our forerunner is entred into Heaven for us.*

Yet are we not left without other viſible Pledges of the ſame hope; more particularly this bleſſed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Chriſt, wherein is lively repreſented the Truth of his Human Nature, and our relation to it. The Bread declares his Body, the Wine his Blood; the breaking of the Bread the Mortality of his Body, the pouring out of the Wine, the ſhedding of his Blood to purchaſe Redemption for Mankind. The Diſtribution of both to every Communicant manifeſts that they

Vol. 2. they are peculiarly concerned in all this; that they are Members of the Myſtical Body of Chriſt; and by receiving his Figurative Body, are aſſured of obtaining in due time the ſame Happineſs with his true Body now in Heaven.

By theſe Figures of his true Body we openly profeſs our Belief of his Incarnation, that he really took Human Fleſh upon him for our Sakes, and not only in appearance, as was the vain Imagination of ancient Hereticks, for that cannot be ſo much as repreſented, which is not real. We acknowledge his Divine Nature at the ſame time, by that Adoration both of Mind and Body, which ought to accompany this religious Action: We profeſs our Belief that he came in the fulneſs of time, and that in time all the ancient Propheſies were fulfilled, in that we celebrate the very time of his Coming; as the Intention, and the Offices, of *this Feſtival* directs.

Laſtly, We ſecure to our ſelves the Benefits of this wonderful Myſtery; if we do all this with ſincere Faith, Repentance and Charity. So ſhall we give occaſion to the Holy Angels to renew their Hymn, to ſing *Glory to God*, who is honoured by this Devotion and Thankfulneſs of his Servants; *Peace on Earth*, wherein Men are hereby reconciled to God, and to each other; and *Good-will towards Men*, who are hereby admitted to the Favour of God, and will be hereafter to the Fruition of him. *Which God of his infinite Mercy Grant.*

FINIS.